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BRAHM PRAKASH

A TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

by

Hasina M. Jamani

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

and Research, McGill University, Montreal,

in partial fulfillment of the

requirement for the degree

of Master of Arts.

Institute of Islamic Studies

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Abstract

Author: Hasina M Jamani

Title of Thesis: Brahm Prakâsh, A Translation and Analysis.

Department: Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University.

Degree: M.A.

This thesis seeks to examine Brahm Prakâsh, a ginân-religious poem - from the literary heritage of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî community of the Indian Sub-continent. The Brahm Prakâsh is a didactic poem, composed in a mystical vein. It seeks to guide an Ismâ'îlî murîd <believer> from stage to stage of spiritual progress toward the attainment of the darśan <vision> of the Lord within one's own self-hood.

The study reveals that the Brahm Prakâsh, in describing the mystical path appears to find its basis in an indigenous Indian religious phenomenon, the Tantric tradition. This thesis, therefore, examines how the Brahm Prakâsh reconstructs and restructures the Tantric element, by super-imposing upon the Tantric frame-work a Shî'î form of Islam.

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Résumé

Auteur: Hasina M Jamani

Titre de Thèse: Le Brahm Prakâsh, une traduction et une analyse.

Département: L'institut des études islamiques, l'université de McGill.

Degré: Maîtrise

Cette thèse vise à examiner le Brahm Prakâsh, un ginân- poème réligieux qu'a produit l'héritage littéraire de la communauté Nizârî Ismâ'îlî du sous-continent indien. Le Brahm Prakâsh est un poème didactique composé dans une veine mystique. Il essaie de conduire un murîd <croyant> Ismâ'îlî d'une étage à une autre dans un progrès spirituel qui parvient finalement au darśan <vue> du Seigneur au dedans de soi-même.

L'étude montre que le Brahm Prakâsh, en décrivant le sentier mystique, se fonde manifestement sur un phenomène réligieux indigène- la tradition tantrique. Cette thèse examine, donc, comment le Brahm Prakâsh reconstruit et reforme l'élément tantrique par l'imposition d'un Islam d'un caractère Shî'î sur la charpente tantrique.

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Acknowledgements

Primarily, this thesis owes a debt of gratitude and appreciation to the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, without whose generous contribution towards my study at McGill University, I would not have been able to undertake the masters programme.

It is to my thesis supervisor, Dr. C.J. Adams, to whom I owe my sincere thanks for his patience and painstaking care which he took in reviewing the successive drafts of this study and for making this work presentable. If this study deserves any appreciation the credit is due to him.

The support and encouragement which I received from my parents has been tremendous. I am particularly indebted to my sister, Almas, whose constant support and motivation has enabled me to see this study through the end. And it is to her that I dedicate this thesis.

Finally, I must acknowledge my collegues, Diamond Rattansi and Derryl Maclean in particular who rendered their time and valuable assistance towards the completion of this thesis. I am also grateful to Miss Salma <Sr.> Lakhani for typing most part of this thesis.

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Transliteration

The transliteration scheme followed in this thesis , for Arabic and Persian terms is that which has been devised by the Institute of Islamic Studies. For words derived from Sanskrit and those belonging to the Hindu tradition, they have been transliterated as they appear in Benjamin Walker's, Hindu World <see the Bibliography>. The sub-script and the super-script for . are indicated by ̣ and ˙ respectively. In order to preserve the attractiveness of the thesis the recurring foreign words such as da'wa, qinân pîr etc., have been under-lined only upon their first appearance.

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Introduction

Shî'î Ismâ'îlism claims a long history. In the course of its 1200 years of history, the Ismâ'îlî movement became sub-divided into series of separate developments. These developments of Ismâ'îlism, W.Ivanow maintains, are divided into 'phases', some running parallel to others and some developing in sequence directly or after a certain time-period.[1] Thus, the Carmatian band of Bahrain which horrified the Islamic world during the fourth century - the Fâṭimid Caliphate of Cairo with its highly civilized capital and its advanced intellectual life - the encyclopaedist brotherhood of Ikhwân as-Ṣafâ' which, in the fifth century attempted to popularize learning and philosophy among the masses - the dreaded Assassins of Syria and Persia in the fifth and the sixth centuries are all different facets of the same movement.[2] This may be put in B. Lewis' words, "Ismâ'îlism was expressed in infinite forms both doctrinal and organisational."[3]

Of these different 'phases' of the Ismâ'îlî movement, its growth and development in the Indian Sub-continent, especially in its Nizârî form, has by far received the least

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attention.[4] This phase presents yet another characterisitic evolution in the history of Ismâʿîlism, particularly its adjustment to Hinduism. This is evidenced by the presence of a widely scattered Ismâʿîlî community - more popularly known as the Khôjâ community - not only in the Indian Sub-continent, but spread during recent years to the African and the North American continents. These Khôjâs consider themselves to have been a product of the Ismâʿîlî movement which spread in the Indian Sub-continent during the medieval era.

Satpanth, "the Path to the Truth", is the name of a sect by which Nizârî Ismâʿîlism was spread into the Indian Sub-continent by various Nizârî dâʿîs and pîrs who are alleged to have arrived there for daʿwa purposes during the medieval era.[5] The present day Nizârî Ismâʿîlîs or Khôjâs consider themselves to have been converted from Hinduism to Islam by the daʿwa activities of these Nizârî dâʿîs and pîrs.

As a sub-sect of Shîʿî Islam the Nizârî Ismâʿîlîs hold that after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, the divine power, guidance and leadership, manifested themselves in ʿAlî as the first Imâm and that religious authority is transferred by inherited right to his successors.[6] Over a period of time, the Shîʿî sect divided into several branches depending on the person in the main line of descent to whom they gave their allegiance. The Ismâʿîlîs get their name from the fact that

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as a result of a split in the 8th century, they gave allegiance to Imâm Ismâ'îl, while the majority considered Imâm Ismâ'îl's brother Mûsâ Kâẓim as the successor to Imâm Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq. They came to be known as Ithnâ-'Asharîs.

Similarly, in the 10-11th centuries, at the death of the Fâṭimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir, another major split occurred. The followers of al-Mustanṣir's eldest son, Nizâr, established their stronghold at Alamût and came to be known as Nizârîs, while the followers of his younger brother, Musta'lî, who succeeded al-Mustanṣir, as the Fâṭimid Caliph in Egypt, came to be known as Bohrâs. The Nizârî Ismâ'îlî community of the Indian Sub-continent, also known as Khôjâs, trace its origins to this Nizârî Ismâ'îlî branch of Shî'î Islam established at Alamût. Presently, they are the followers of Âghâ Khân IV, whom they consider Imâm, because of his claims of direct lineal descent from 'Alî.

Although this Khôjâ community considers itself as a product of the da'wa activities of the Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs during the medieval era, the coming of these Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs was not the first time that the Ismâ'îlî element had entered upon the Indian soil. The Indian Sub-continent, as is well-known, has been an area of concern for the nascent

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Ismâ'îlî da'wa from pre-Fâţimid times.[7] The emergence of Ismâ'îlism in the Indian Sub-continent can, therefore, be seen into two phases:

a> Fâţimid and pre-Fâţimid period i.e. till 1094.

b> Nizârî and post-Nizârî phase.[8]

It is alleged that the earliest contact which the Ismâ'îlî element had with India came prior to the establishment of the Fâţimid Caliphate, from the time of dawr al-satr, when one wing of the da'wa was to work in Hind and Sind. Muḥammad bin Ismâ'îl, the seventh Imâm of the Ismâ'îlîs is himself supposed to have fled with his sons and to have taken refuge in Sind.[9] S.M. Stern however, doubts the authenticity of the information provided by Juwayni regarding such early Ismâ'îlî activities in the Indian Sub-continent.[10]

The Iśmâ'îlî sources, on the other hand, first make mention of the establishment of Ismâ'îlî activity in Sind in the 9th century, by a certain dâ'î named al-Haytham.[11] This penetration eventually led to the establishment of a Fâţimid principality in Sind, when it is maintained that the Fâţimid Caliph, al-Azîz, sent al-Shaybân with a military escort, which took Multan in 977 <in the medieval era Multan and Uchh constituted Upper Sind>. The khuţbah of the Fâţimid Caliphs continued to be read there for several decades.[12] This was the situation in Sind until raids of Maḥmud of Ghazna

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temporarily brought Sind under the domination of the Ghaznavids. When the Ghaznavids' rule rapidly degenerated, the Fâţimids who for a while had succumbed, again seized authority over Sind and ruled the province for more than a century until the final conquest of Sind by the Ghûrids in 1175 compelled the Ismâ'îlî movement to go underground.[13]

The subsequent history of the Ismâ'îlîs is generally associated with the resurgence of the Sumra dynasty, which is alleged to have had Carmation inclinations. One continues to find, maintains J. Hollister, through two centuries, occasional references to these Malâḥidah or Carmation activities in the Sub-continent.[14] But, apart from this questionable information regarding Ismâ'îlî activities in Sind, nothing can be attested about them until the appearance of the Nizârîs on the scene. This Ismâ'îlî movement is believed to have begun, as mentioned above, by various Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs, who are supposed to have arrived to the Indian Sub-continent at least from the thirteenth century onwards.

Although, the Nizârî movement, in fact, can be considered a continuation of the same Ismâ'îlî movement previously existing in the Indian Sub-continent, there are a few factors which make the Nizârî movement stand out as a distinct phase in the history of Ismâ'îlism. Earlier Ismâ'îlî as well as non-Ismâ'îlî historical sources attest to

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Ismâ'îlî domination in Sind at least until the Ghûrid invasion in 1175. This information together with the fact that the Nizârî pîrs began their da'wa activities in Sind, suggests that the Ismâ'îlî element had not been obiliterated completely from Sind.[15] Their presence could have facilitated the penetration of the Nizârî da'wa into the northern parts of the area, and that, in turn perhaps, led to the rise and development of Satpanth Ismâ'îlism. However, there is no specific evidence to establish if there was any connection between the two Ismâ'îlî movements. Moreover, the Khôjâs with whom we are concerned in this study consider themselves to have been converted from Hinduism to Islam by the arrival of the Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs to the Indian Sub-continent during the medieval era.

Our study concentrates on this second phase of Ismâ'îlî movement whose da'wa activities resulted in the rise of Satpanth Ismâ'îlism in the Indian Sub-continent. However, our aim is not to cover the entire movement as it developed in the Indian Sub-continent. But, seeks to examine an aspect of the thought of Satpanth Ismâ'îlism as it was conveyed to the converts by the Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs in the Indian Sub-continent.

II

An attempt to study any religious aspect of Satpanth or

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Nizârî Ismâ'îlism must necessarily begin by an examination of the community's major religious literature, the ginâns. The ginân literature constitutes almost the entire corpus of indigenous literature preserved by the community. The term ginân is a collective appelation given to a body of literature constituting several devotional compositions composed in Indian vernacular languages. This ginân literature is attributed to the authorship of various Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs who are believed to have carried on da'wa activities in the Indian Sub-continent, on behalf of the Imâms of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî sect of Persia.

The nature of Satpanth or Nizârî Ismâ'îlism can be best reflected by examining the ginân literature, since the ginâns are seen as a product of Satpanth religion. However, to examine the literature in its entirety falls beyond the scope of this study. Our study seeks to study a ginân called the Brahm Prakâsh <Divine Illumination> from the ginân corpus. It has been made the focus of our study for two reasons:

a> the ginân Brahm Prakâsh is attributed to the authorship of Shams al-Dîn, a Nizârî pîr who is alleged to represent the initial phase of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî da'wa in the Indian Sub-continent. The Brahm Prakâsh would, therefore, represent the earliest efforts of the pîr to project Satpanth or Nizârî Ismâ'îlism to new converts from Hinduism in a new environment and situation.

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b> the Brahm Prakâsh deals with a mystical concept of sumiran <contemplation> which exhibits the essence of Satpanth Ismâ'îlism. Although this concept is echoed in some manner in the entire ginân literature, it is dealt with in an elaborate and consistent manner in the Brahm Prakâsh. Hence, the Brahm Prakâsh is an important composition for understanding a fundamental spiritual aspect of Ismâ'îlism, as it was conveyed by the Nizârî pîr to the new converts in the Sub-continent.

Yet, another reason for our dealing with this ginân is that the concept of sumiran occupies a significant place among the present day Nizârî Ismâ'îlî religious system. The religious system to which an Ismâ'îlî murîd <believer> adheres as a member of the community, by virtue of birth or otherwise, imposes upon him a set of religious duties and obligations formulated for the practise of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî faith. All these religious obligations are supposed to be observed in their jamâ'ât khâna <House of Assembly> established for the purpose. Among the various duties, performance of the dû'â <ritual prayer> ; paying the dashond <tithe> etc., are made incumbent upon an Ismâ'îlî murîd. Some of these duties, although not obligatory, have been institutionalised - as a part of the religious ceremonies to be held in the jamâ'ât khâna - by what is termed within the community religious organisation, a mandlî or majlis.[16]

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Among the various mandlîs into which an Ismâ'îlî murîd initiates himself, principally on his own accord, initiation into a special mandlî, known as the bayt al-khyâl <chamber of contemplation> assumes the highest significance. This mandlî is set up for dhikr practises which are believed to aid a murîd in progressing spiritually towards the attainment of Illumination <darśan> . The attainment of darśan forms the basis for his mokṣa <liberation> from human life on earth. For this practise of dhikr, also known as bandagi, an Ismâ'îlî murîd is given a bol or ism 'âzam <the great Name> by the Imâm i-zamân <the Imâm of the Time>, which henceforth remains personal to him. The initiate is supposed to practise, i.e. meditate on his bol, in order to develop his bâṭini <inner> self towards the attainment of spiritual Illumination. Hence, the Brahm Prakâsh forms an important composition to study the basis of a fundamental practise among the Indian Ismâ'îlîs.

The ginân Brahm Prakâsh consists of 150 couplets, composed in a mixture of old Gujarati and Hindi. It is composed in a mystical vein, discussing the various mystical states and stages towards the realization of the mystical experience and contains instructions on how to attain it. The ginân begins by an emphasis on the divine properties of sat śabda <True Word>, the ism 'âzam of the sûfîs. It then breaks off to give a fairly detailed account of the uselessness of various ascétic practises which are not

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centred on attaining the brahm sukh <divine bliss>. It then continues to name several adepts who in their time attained brahm sukh, by their absolute absorption in the sat śabda. The last section of the work deals with the ecstatic experience with the divine Lord in the unfathomable depths of one's own self-hood, that results from the contemplation of the sat śabda.

Chapter One of our study seeks to offer a background to the introduction of Satpanth or Nizârî Ismâ'îlism into the Indian Sub-continent and an introduction into the nature and structure of the ginân literature. This chapter will form the basis for understanding the type and nature of Ismâ'îlism which evolved in the Indian Sub-continent.

Chapter Two of the study offers a translation of the text of the Brahm Prakâsh into English. Chapter Three is divided into two sections. The ginân Brahm Prakâsh, while describing the various mystical states and stages of the mystical path structures a peculiar esoteric vocabulary which is found to belong largely to a well-formulated system of thought, namely the Tantric tradition, an indigenous Indian religious phenomenon. Therefore, section <a> offers a brief background into that aspect of the Tantric tradition whose vocabulary appears similar to the ginân Brahm Prakâsh. Section <b> examines how the ginân Brahm Prakâsh restructures the Tantric element in its framework, so as to make it an

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integral aspect of Ismâ'îlî thought, still retained and esteemed among its adherents.

The Text

The copy of the ginân Brahm Prakâsh was made available to us by the Ismailia Association of India.[17] Initially two texts were obtained from the India Association. The first one is a photocopy of the text published by Lâljî Devrâj in 1921.[18] The second was published by the Ismailia Association for India in book form with a few other major ginâns of several dâ'îs and pîrs. This book is published with the title "Pavitra Ginânano Sangrah", or Compilations of Holy Ginâns, 1st edition, 1966.

We have used the Lâljî Devrâj copy for our study, since it is the earlier version available to us.[19] Yet, another reason for our choice is the significant variations of content between the two versions. For instance, in the copy published by the Association, the terms referring to the Imâm in the ginân have been rendered as 'Alî, the name referring to all the Imâms in general, whereas the Lâljî Devrâj copy retains different word-terms. As we do not have access to the manuscript copy, we are not in a position to determine which of the two is closest to the original, but references in several private publications show the use of the Lâljî Devrâj copy. Thus, indicating that the version published by

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him was extensivley used before the publication task was taken over by the Association in the early nineteen-seventies. The Lâljî Devrâj copy is written in Gujarati script, as has been the case with almost the entire ginân literature, which has been transliterated into the Gujarati script from the original Khôjkî script for the convenience of Ismâ'îlî readers who do not read Khôjkî.

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Notes to Introduction

[1]W. Ivanow, Ismâîlî Literature, A Bibliographical Survey, <Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1963>, 5.

[2]B. Lewis, Origins of Ismâ'îlism, <Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons Ltd., 1940>, 1.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Of the few studies that have been undertaken, Azim Nânjî offers us an excellent historical background of the Nizârî movement in his work: The Nizârî Ismâ'îlî Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan sub-Continent,<Delmar: Caravan Books, 1974>. For a good background of Ismâ'îlî penetration into the Indian Sub-continent see, Derryl Maclean, "Religion and Society in Arab Sind," <Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University,1984>. A few interesting studies have also been undertaken on the ginân literature. See our Bibliography.

[5]W. Ivanow, "The Sect of Imâm Shâh in Gujarat," Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. XII <1936>,20.

[6]H.H. The Agakhan, The Memoirs of Aga Khan, <London: Simon and Schuster, 1954>, 178-79.

[7]D. Maclean, "Religion and Society, 316.

[8]G. Khakee, "The DasaAvatara of Pir Shams as Linguistic and Literary Evidence of the Early Development of Ismailism in Sind," Sind Quarterly Vol.VIII, No.2 <1980>, 44.

[9]S.M. Stern, "The Early Ismâ'îlî Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurasan and Transoxiana," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Vol. XXIII <1960>, 85-87.

[10]S.M. Stern, "Ismâ'îlî Propaganda and Fâţimid Rule in Sind," Islamic Culture, Vol. XXIII <1949>, 298.

[11]G. Khakee, The DasaAvatara of Pir Shams as Linguistic, 44.

[12]W. Ivanow, "Satpanth," Collectanea,Vol. I <1948>, 6-8.

[13]J. N. Hollister, The Shia of India, <London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1953>, 346.

[14]Malâḥidah is a collective term denoting sectarians, probably Shî'îs, but more particularly extremists like the Carmatians. The alleged association of the Carmatian with the

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Ismâ'îlîs is well known. See J.N. Hollister, The Shia, 348.

[15]J. N. Hollister maintains, that in the thirteenth century, one comes across activities of the Alamût Assassins in the Indian Sub-continent, when the Ghûrid ruler, Alâ al-Dîn Muḥammad Shâh Khwarazm is alleged to have been assassinated by the Alamût emissaries. Yet, another episode is believed to have taken place in 1236 in Delhi during the reign of Queen Radiyya. This incident claiming to show a continuity of Carmatian activity with that of the Nizârîs, reports a group of Carmations under the leadership of one Nûr Turk who gathered at Delhi. They, it is alleged, attacked the masjid and a riot ensued. It is suggested by some scholars that the Nûr Turk referred to in this account is the same as Nûr Satgur, who according to the Nizârî sectarian accounts is considered the first Nizârî missionary to have come to the Sub-continent. However, nothing authentic can be established regarding this connection. For details on the controversy see, The Shia, 348-350.

[16]For details see, "Our Religious Rites and Rituals," Shia Imami Ismailia Association for India, Book VII, 1975.

[17]The text used for this thesis is published by Mukhî Lâljî Devrâj, Brahm Prakâsh, A Ginân by Pîr Shams al-Dîn, Bombay, 1921.

[18]We tried to obtain the manuscript copy of the text which we were informed is available at the Ismailia Association Library in India. But, due to certain policies of the India Association, we have been unable to obtain the same.

[19]We were informed that Mr. Lâljî Devrâj who was in charge of the Recreation Club, an Ismâ'îlî religious organisation based in India, took upon himself the task of compiling the ginâns found in the Khôjkî script and transliterated all the available manuscripts of the ginâns for the first time into Gujarati script. Since then, the copies of the ginân texts used by the community are those made available by Lâljî Devrâj. For certain reasons, Lâljî Devrâj is believed to have destroyed all the Khôjkî manuscripts in his possession. Consequently, the Ismailia Association, which replaced the Recreation Club, has taken up the task of verifying the Gujarati texts from manuscripts found elsewhere. Presently a catalogue of Khojkî manuscripts which is available at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London is being prepared by Mrs. Zawahir Muir.

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Chapter I

Brief Background of the Nizârî Ismâʿîlî daʿwa in the Indian Sub-continent and the Nature and Structure of the ginân Literature

To study an aspect of the literary tradition of movements such as the Nizârî Ismâʿîlîs of the Indian Sub-continent, it is fundamental that the characteristic features of the movement and the place this literature holds in its thought and history, be understood clearly. It is only in this way one can hope to appreciate the assumptions reflected in any particular aspect of the movement. For this reason this chapter concerns itself with the spread and development of the Nizârî Ismâʿîlî daʿwa in the Indian Sub-continent by way of presenting a brief sketch of the pîrs and dâʿîs whose daʿwa activities are alleged to have resulted in the creation of the Nizârî Ismâʿîlî literary heritage, the ginâns.

The sectarian sources of the Nizârî Ismâʿîlîs of the Indian Sub-continent view their history as beginning with the split between the Nizârîs and the Fâṭimids, an event which was to separate the course of the Ismâʿîlî movement dramatically. In the 13th century, the Nizârî Ismâʿîlîs,

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after the schism over the issue of succession to al-Mustanşir were undergoing a change of fortune. The split between the supporters of Nizâr and Musta'lî in 1094 led to the establishment of three major spheres of Ismâ'îlî activities during the medieval era. The first was the Fâţimid Caliphate which continued at Cairo until it was finally put to an end by Şalâḥ al-Dîn in 1171. The second was the Şulayḥid dynasty of Yemen which associated itself with the adherents of Ṭayyibî Ismâ'îlişm. And the third was Nizârî Ismâ'îlism which established its stronghold at Alamût and which under the leadership of Ḥasan-i-Şabbâḥ entered in the words of B. Lewis "a period of intensive development in doctrine and in political action and for a while played an important and dramatic role in the affairs of Islam."[1]

It was at Alamût that a significant event took place which was dramatically to separate the Fâţimids and the Nizârîs. This event was the proclamation of the Qiyâmah <ressurection> in 1164 by Ḥasan 'alâ dhikrihî al-Salâm, the 23rd Imâm of the Nizârîs.[2] The event of Qiyâmah marked a shift in certain key roles of the doctrine of Imâmah. Ḥasan 'ala dhikrihî al-Salâm established once and for all the priority of the Imâm and the institution of the Imâmah.[3]

According to the classical doctrine, as it was built under the Fâţimids, the Ismâ'îlî religious philosophy was based on a cosmic scheme.[4] The origins of all existence were

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seen in the form of a hierarchy emanating from the Supreme Godhead who is "unknowable, inaccessible, ineffable, unpredicable."[5] Through his amr <command> and through the process of ibdâ' <origination> God brings into existence the world of Intelligences, the first of which is called al-'Aql al-Awwal. Below these there came a series of Intelligences, which together constituted what was termed as the 'Âlam al-Ibdâ' <the Universe of Intelligences>.[6]

At another level the hierarchy of Intelligence was made to correspond to the 'Âlam al-Dîn <the Universe of Religion> in order to provide a religious hierarchy among human beings. Within the Ismâ'îlî system, this scheme was represented by Hudûd al-Dîn <hierarcy of worshippers>, the lower among whom corresponded in turn to the lesser cosmic principles.[7] The higher ones constituted the first three Intelligences mentioned above. These came to be identified with the Prophet, his Wâṣî and the succeeding Imâms respectively. Thus, for the Fâṭimids, the Prophet Muḥammad, 'Alî and the Imâms after him were the epiphanic representatives, the maẓhars of the three Intelligences on the earth.[8]

A fundamental principle underlying this cosmic scheme was that the full chain of hierarchies existed as a part of a single indivisible process. These existed and had meaning only in as much as they formed an integral aspect of the

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whole system. The various components stood in relation to the preceeding phase in terms of being less perfect than the phase coming before. For example, the second Intelligence was considered less perfect than the first Intelligence, but at the same time was superior to the third Intelligence and so on.[9] For man, the religious hierarchy was the path he would have to traverse in order to ascend towards the first Intelligence which formed for him his goal i.e. attaining unity with God.

As a conjunct to this cosmic scheme of vertical hierarchy, the Ismâ'îlî theosophy developed a typological view of history on the horizontol scale. It was represented on the horizontal scale by a scheme of Cycles of Prophecy. Each cycle began with a Prophet and his Wâṣî. There had been six cycles already and the Prophet Muḥammad had inaugurated the seventh. Each of the cycles was closed by a Qiyâmah marking the passage from one Revelation to another Revelation, and the seventh would end with a Qiyâmat al-Qiyâmah <the Grand Ressurection>. This would also mark the advent of the Qâ'im with the power to abrogate the Sharî'a and herald a new religion.[10]

The proclamation of Qiyâmah by Hasan 'alâ dhikrihî al-Salâm marked the end of the primacy of the Sharî'a and the beginning of the new era in which the spiritual life of the soul was placed in prominence. The religion of Qiyâmah

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established the priority of the Imâm and his office. The Imâm who was seen as the second Intelligence in the Fâţimid scheme, now corresponded to the first Intelligence, the epiphany of the creative word <kun> itself .[11] The Imâm had the authority to make law rather than simply guard it. Consequently, the goal of a believer, traversing the spiritual path, was to 'know' the Imâm. For to know the Imâm was equal to knowing God. The religious outlook of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs, thus, focussed on absolute devotion to the Imâm, taking on a more personalised form.

The doctrine of Qiyâmah in its strongest assertion of the priority of the Imâmah set the Nizârîs not only against the Orthodox but also distinguished them from the general stream of Shî'î Islam.[12] Along with this, the defeat of their political base at Alamût by the Mongols in 1256 decided the fate of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs. They fell victims to the devastation of the Mongols. Their stronghold at Alamût was taken and reduced to rubble. The Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs survived but went underground for several centuries. The Nizârî Ismâ'îlî Imâms went into the phase of satr or concealment. The remnants of the sect appeared henceforth in the guise of şûffîs in order to avoid further persecution.[13] With this background, we now come to an area, namely, the Indian Sub-continent where the Ismâ'ilî movement, although not the initial penetration of the Ismâ'îlîs, traces its origin historically and doctrinally to the Nizârî branch of Persia.

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It constitutes a distinct phase from the earlier Ismâʿîlî movement in the Indian Sub-continent.

It is from Alamût and Persia that the Nizârî Imâms are supposed to have sent pîrs and dâʿîs to the Indian Sub-continent for daʿwa purposes. The history of the origins and development of the daʿwa activities in the Sub-continent is full of controversies and complications. According to W.Ivanow, the Nizârî Ismâʿîlî pîrs, in order to avoid persecution and to avoid making their aims and ambitions overtly apparent, appeared in şûfî guise. As a result there is hardly any mention of these pîrs or their activities in non-Ismâʿîlî historical sources.[14] The only means available to obtain information pertaining to their history are the sectarian Ismâʿîlî accounts.[15] But since the sectarian accounts were written basically for religious purposes and to provide moral and ethical teachings to the converted masses, they are woven together with myth and legend to a large extent. However, since these sectarian accounts are the only source of information, reliance on them becomes incumbent.

The spread and the development of the Nizârî Ismâʿîlî daʿwa in the Indian Sub-continent can be seen into three phases: The establishment of the daʿwa is associated with two figures, Nûr Satgur and Shams al-Dîn. The sectarian sources credit these two personalities with having begun the daʿwa in Sind, Multan and Gujarat. This phase was followed

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by the consolidation of the Nizârî da'wa with its massive conversion and organisation of the Nizârî community by the 15th century. The third and the final phase was marked by schism of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs into two branches: The Khôjâs and the Imâm Shâhîs; this phase led to the termination of the institution of pirâtan <office of pîr>.

Khôjâ sectarian accounts mention the first Nizârî missionary coming to India, in the person of Nur al-Dîn, who took the name of Nûr Satgur, the name meaning teacher of the true light.[16] A layer of confusion surrounds the arrival of this foremost personality who almost appears as a legendary figure in the history of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî da'wa in the Indian Sub-continent.[17] It is difficult to ascertain the time of Nûr Satgur's arrival or the period of his activities, which makes it difficult to determine the actual period of the establishment of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî da'wa in the Sub-continent.

The sectarian sources furnish us with certain dates regarding Nûr Satgur, but it hardly need be mentioned that they are dubious. It is variously alleged that Nûr Satgur was sent either by al-Mustanşir, the Fâţimid Caliph, to preach on behalf of his son Nizâr in the Sub-continent[18] or that he was sent at a much later date by Ḥasan 'alâ dhikrihî al-Salâm, the 27th Imâm of the Nizârîs.[19] Furthermore, a shrine alleged to be that of Nûr Satgur at Navsari in

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Gujarat, mentions the year of his death as 1094.[20] This date coincides with the date of the death of al-Mustanşir, the last Caliph before the Nizârî-Musta'lîan split. W. Ivanow is of the opinion that this was probably concocted by one of the branches of Pirânâ Sayyids established at Navsari after the split in the community during the 15th/16th centuries.[21]

If information regarding the personality who is credited with having established the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî da'wa in the Sub-continent is shrouded, details regarding the second personality in the da'wa remains all the more obscure. Shams al-Dîn, the second figure in the da'wa line, is supposed to have carried on Nizârî da'wa activity basically in Sind and Multan.[22] This is evidenced by the presence of a large community in Upper Sind who call themselves 'Shamsis', converts at the hands of the Nizârî Pîr Shams al-Dîn Sabzavâri. Presently they recognise the Âghâ Khân as their spiritual leader.[23] Since it is to him that the ginân Brahm Prakâsh, the object of our study is attributed, we will deal with him in detail.

Traditions surrounding Shams al-Dîn Sabzavâri has acquired for him many identities. Among the various identities, there has been a confusion of two other distinct

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personalities, Shams al-Dîn Muḥammad, the Nizârî Imâm and Shams-i-Tabrîzî, the mentor of Jalāl-ud-Dîn Rûmî.

In attempting to trace the cause of this confusion of identities, the earliest sectarian source available to us is a ginân Satveṇijî Vel.[24] This ginân is attributed to Nar Muḥammad Shâh, an active figure in the later phase of the Nizârî Ismâʿîlî daʿwa. This ginân confuses Shams al-Dîn Muḥammad, the 28th Imâm of the Nizârîs with Pîr Shams Sabzavâri. The astonishing statement in Satveṇiji Vel equates Shams al-Dîn Sabzavâri with Shams al-Dîn Muḥammad, the Nizârî Imâm. The ginân says that Imâm Shams al-Dîn Muḥammad abdicated the Imâmah in favour of his son Qâsim Shâh and travelled to India for daʿwa purposes. This particular ginân is attributed to Nar Muḥammad Shâh, the son of Imâm Shâh, who seceded from the main line of the Nizârî daʿwa in the 15th/16th centuries, claiming the Imâmah for himself. Since the institution of Imâmah in Ismâʿîlism is hereditary, it was fundamental for Nar Muḥammad Shâh to establish a direct lineage in order to authenticate his claims. By making Pîr Shams al-Dîn the same person as Imâm Shams al-Dîn and claiming direct descent from Pîr Shams, he could then assert his own right to the Imâmah.[25]

As for the identification of Pîr Shams with Shams-i-Tabrîzî, it has also been due to the confusion with Imâm Shams al-Dîn. Imâm Shams al-Dîn is supposed to have

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lived in Tabrîz for a period of time which could be the cause for confusing the two. Further, the identification of Pîr Shams with Imâm Shams, in due course resulted in the amalgamation of these three distinct personalities.[26]

With regard to the period of Pîr Shams' da'wa activities in the Sub-continent, there are apparently three versions. The first is a Shajra <genealogical tree> found in the custody of the mutawallî of the shrine of Pîr Shams in Uchh, Multan. The Shajra says that Shams al-Dîn was born in Ghazni on the 17th Rajab 560/1165 i.e. about a hundred years before the fall of Alamût. The Shajra makes him come to Multan in 598/1201 and permits him to live till 675/1276. He is said to have come into contact with the şûfî celebrity Bahâ' al-Dîn Zakariyyâ, who is supposed to have died in 1276.[27]

The second version is obtained from the ginâns attributed to Shams al-Dîn himself. They refer to his activities during the early part of the 12th century. Surbhân Vel, one of the longer ginâns attributed to Shams al-Dîn, mentions his arrival in Samvat 1175/1118.[28] Yet, in another of his ginâns, Chandrabhân Vel, his arrival in Chenab is given as Samvat 1200/1143.[29] However, when we come across the name of the Imâm on whose behalf Shams al-Dîn is supposed to have carried on da'wa activity, the name of Imâm Qâsim Shâh is mentioned.[30] Imâm Qâsim Shâh belongs to the post Alamût period. Alamût, as is well-known, was razed by the

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Mongols in 1256, and after that the history of the Nizârîs and their Imâms enters a new stage. The child of the last Imâm of Alamût, Rûkn al-Dîn Khûr Shâh, is said to be Shams al-Dîn. In the Ismâ'îlî genealogy Qâsim Shâh is the name of the Imâm who succeeded Imâm Shams. Thus, if Qâsim Shâh was the Imâm of the time, then the period of Shams' activity would extend into the 14th century.[31]

It is proposed that this confusion can be attributed to a little known schism which took place upon the death of Imâm Shams. Two branches of the Ismâ'îlîs were formed, one of them giving allegiance to Qâsim Shâh. The attempt to associate Pîr Shams with this Imâm was perhaps the assertion of a group in India of its support for Qâsim Shâh.[32]

Yet, another layer of confusion was added in the modern sources linking Pîr Shams to the Nûrbakhshîya sect in Kashmir. The Nûrbakhshîya Order was introduced into Kashmir by one Shams al-Dîn, the son of Sayyid Muḥammad Nûrbakhsh, who represented Shâh Qâsim.[33] Shams al-Dîn began his work in Kashmir in 1502. Since Pîr Shams is supposed to have travelled through Tibet and Kashmir, it appears that a confusion occurred equating the two distinct personalities.

The confusion is further clouded by the fact that the mutawallîs of the shrine of Pîr Shams claim themselves to be Ithnâ 'Asharîs, followers of Mûsâ Kâẓim. They also claim that

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Pîr Shams came to the Indian Sub-continent in order to make Ithnâ ʿAsharî daʿwa.[34]

Despite all the clarifications offered, the historical personality of this pîr remains obscure. The personality who is credited with having set the Nizari Ismâʿîlî daʿwa into motion and to whom is also attributed a large ginân corpus remains an enigma. Thus, the initial phase represented by Nûr Satgur and Shams al-Dîn remains shrouded in doubt.

The figure in the daʿwa development to whom a key role is attributed is Pîr Şadr al-Dîn. From this period onwards there is sufficient information available to establish Şadr al-Dîn as a historical personality. He is considered as a şûfî in non-Ismâʿîlî sources, one who made valuable contributions towards the interaction of the Hindus and the Muslims in the 14/15th centuries.[35] The Khôjâ sectarian sources credit Şadr al-Dîn with having consolidated the Nizârî Ismâʿîlî daʿwa and with having organized the community. He is said to have established congregational houses <jamâʿât khâna> for the community and called converts by the title, Khwâja.[36] The term Khôjâ in current use for a Nizârî Ismâʿîlî is a corruption of the word, khwâja. Pîr Şadr al-Dîn was succeeded by his son Ḥasan Kabîr al-Dîn. Nothing is recorded of his activities. In the Satveṇiji, the

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date of his death is given as 1449.[37]

The consolidation phase of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî da'wa was followed by a major schism in the 15th/16th centuries. This split occurred because of the claims by Imâm Shâh, the son of Kabîr al-Dîn over pirâtan. According to the Nizârî sectarian accounts, Kabîr al-Dîn was succeeded by his brother Tâj al-Dîn as a pîr. It is alleged that Tâj al-Dîn was not accepted as a pîr by a section of the community and his death at an early age on the one hand, <perhaps, due to the shock arising from the allegation of the community that he had kept for himself the najrânâ or offerings to be submitted to the Imâm of the time> and the claims of Imâm Shâh for pirâtan on the other hand, plunged the community into crisis.[38]

The Nizârî sources mention that Imâm Shâh was never endowed with pirâtan by the Imâm. Nevertheless, he established himself at Gujarat and carried out his da'wa activities. However, it was his son, Nar Muḥammad Shâh, who perhaps taking advantage of the turbulence within the community at the death of Pîr Tâj al-Dîn, set up an independent line and organised the Imâm Shâhî sect in Gujarat. The Imâm al-Mustanṣir II, in response to this schism dispatched a book, the 'Pandiyât-i Jawânmardî' <Maxims of Fortitude> condemning the Imâm Shâhîs and exhorting the community to accept the book as a pîr.[39] To avoid further crisis in future, the structure of the da'wa was changed with

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the Imâms appointing Vakîls <agents> to administer the community. With the crisis and the split, the age of the pîrs and of massive conversion came to an end.[40]

The split separated the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî community into two branches. The name Satpanthîs, from that time onwards, is used specifically to indicate the Imâm Shâhî line, while the followers of the Nizârî Imâms are known as Khôjâs. Although the Imâm Shâhîs possess the same ginân literature as the Khôjâs, they do not consider themselves to have any connection with the latter.[41]

With regard to the nature of the da'wa teachings in the Indian Sub-continent, the Nizârî pîrs faced a critical problem. They had to present Islam in a form which would be appealing to the new converts from Hinduism. W. Ivanow states, that "the pîrs separated the meaning and spirit of Islam from its hard Arabic shell."[42] He further states:

> They explained the high ideals of Islam in the familiar terms of the ancestral religion and culture of the new converts Hinduism, striving to make of them good mu'mins, sincere adepts of the spirit of Islam, rather than muslims, i.e. those who formally profess Islam, often without paying attention to its spirit and implications.[43]

The attempts of the pîrs was to project Islam as the crowning phase of the whole development of Hinduism.

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According to them, the Qur'ân was the last and the final Ved, completing, abrogating, and superseding the earlier revelations. In this theory, Hinduism was merely a preparatory phase, just as Christianity, Judaism, etc., in the revelation of the only true religion, Satpanth.[44]

By following this strategy, the pîrs constituted a 'bridge' between Ismâ'îlism and Hinduism which permitted new ideas to enter that entirely different world of Hindu mentality.

One of the critical ways in which the idea of Islam as the culmination of Hinduism was projected came through utilization of the Dasa Avatâra <Ten Incarnation> theory of the Hindus as upheld by the Vaishṇavas. The Lord Vishṇu, according to the Vaishṇavas is incarnated in various forms in different ages <yuga>. In this Kali yuga <present age> the Vaishṇavas have been awaiting the last Avatâra known as Naklanki or Kalki <stainless> to manifest himself. It was apparently, Pîr Shams who first utilized this theory for the da'wa purposes <which can be seen, apart from the other ginâns attributed to Shams al-Dîn, in the Brahm Prakâsh as well>. He preached that the last incarnation of Vishṇu was indeed 'Alî, manifested during the time of the Prophet Muḥammad. By so doing, he superimposed the Shî'î form of Islam upon a Hindu Vaishṇava sub-structure.[45]

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Apart from incorporating the basic Dasa Avatâra theory, the pîrs also made use of Hindu mythological figures, and by relating them to Islamic figures, attempted to project a continuity of Hindu tradition into Islamic tradition. For instance, the figure of Brahma the creator, was identified with that of the Prophet Muḥammad, the figure of Saraswatî as the daughter of Brahma with that of Fâṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad.[46]

The result was, as W. Ivanow states, that the pîrs succeeded "in welding the two cultures into one, and laying the foundation to a new cultural group which in itself bore the seeds of further great progress and potentialities."[47] One of the major resulting elements was the creation of an innovative synthesis in the form of a new literature geared for new converts from Hinduism projecting the true path <Satpanth>. These various long and short compositions consisting of devotional hymns, basically didactic in nature, came to be termed as ginâns.

The word ginân is a popularization of the Sanskrit word jnâna, which is commonly defined as "contemplative or meditative knowledge."[48] In the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî tradition, the word ginân refers to those Ismâ'îlî writings whose authorship is attributed to their various dâ'îs and pîrs who came to the Indian Sub-continent for preaching and conversion. The ginân literature constitutes almost the

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entire corpus of indigenous literature preserved by the community. Consequently, it forms the most important source for the study of any aspect of the development of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî community in the Indian Sub-continent. The present day Ismâ'îlîs regard ginâns as sacred literature. Most of the ginâns are still recited as a part of the religious ceremonies conducted in their jamâ'ât khanâ. W. Ivanow provides a fairly detailed list of the ginâns.[49] He records 800 ginâns of varying length, believed to have been composed by the Ismâ'îlî dâ'îs and pîrs at least from the 13th century until the early part of this century when the composition process ceased and the ginân corpus was frozen.[50]

It is maintained by the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs that the ginâns began as oral tradition. It is, therefore, difficult to ascertain when writing of the ginâns actually began. The manuscripts in which the ginâns are recorded are available at the Ismailia Association for Pakistan. The oldest manuscript dated is mentioned to have been copied in 1736. Since this manuscript, like several others, is mentioned as having been copied from older ones, it is believed that the task of recording ginâns could have been undertaken at least from the 16th century.[51]

The manuscripts of the ginân literature have survived in the khôjkî or khwâja Sindhi script. This script represents the earliest form of Sindhi writing in proto-Nagari

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characters. The khôjkî script appears to be unique to the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs in the history of Indo-Muslim literature. This script, it is believed, was used by the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî pîrs in order to preserve Ismâ'îlî doctrines within the community and also, perhaps, to foster a sense of communal identity.[52] Presently the ginâns, at least those recited for religious ceremonies, have been transliterated into Gujarati script, as most of the present day Ismâ'îlîs do not read the Khôjkî script.

At least six Indian languages are used in the ginâns: Multani, Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati, Hindi, and Kacchi. The languages used in the ginâns reflect the areas from which the manuscripts of the ginân may have originated. As to the form of ginâns, they are composed in the style of the popular devotional type of literature characteristic of most religious literature emerging during the medieval era in the Indian Sub-continent.[53] The ginâns are of varying lengths, usually written in a pada <verse> form. Each stanza is either in the form of chaupâi <quatrains> or of dohâ <couplets>.

Stanzas containing more verses do exist in the ginân literature, but on the whole they reflect these two forms. The longer ginâns called granths are usually given a title. Several long compositions contain a form of appendix called Vel while a few also exist in a minor <nindo, nano> or major

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<moto, vadho> version, a possible indication that one of them was a later composition modelled on the other.[54] One of the main characteristic feature of the ginâns is that each ginân ends with the bhaṇitâ or a signature, identifying the composer of the ginân. This feature is common to the developing devotional literature in north India.[55]

Ginâns are meant to be sung and recited. Râga <music>, therefore, is one of the main features of the ginâns. Râga is a name given to a class of melodies which constitutes the highest expression of Indian classical music.[56] Each râga is believed to create a special emotional effect which colours the mind of a listener and puts him into a certain mood. This is the reason why each ginân has a particular râga and is meant to be sung on specific occasions for a specific ritual or as an aid to meditation on the spiritual path.

The ginân literature is generally arranged according to its composers so that ginâns attributed to a particular pîr are compiled together. A complete subject or doctrinal-wise classification, which would prove useful for categorizing or indexing the ginâns has not yet been attempted. This is true partly because each ginân has a number of themes running through it, which accordingly precludes classification of the ginâns.

However, a preliminary classification attempted in a

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survey work may be offered in the absence of a detailed investigation of the ginân literature. The classification is as follows:[57]

i> Ginâns that can be termed as conversion ginâns. The ginâns belonging to this category reflect the incorporation of Hindu themes and concepts to explain the Satpanth religion, i.e. Nizârî Ismâ'îlism. The basic concept used was the Avatâra theory of the Vaishṇava Hindus. The Vaishṇavas believe in the descent of Vishṇu in ten forms to the earth. Nine Avatâras of the Lord Vishṇu have manifested themselves and the people were awaiting the manifestation of the tenth Avatâra of Lord Vishṇu to redeem them.[58] The Nizârî Ismâ'îlî pîrs showed Satpanth Ismâ'îlism to be a completion of this Vaishṇava belief, by portraying 'Alî, the first Imâm of the Ismâ'îlîs, as the tenth awaited Avatâra.

The accounts of traditional figures of Hindu mythology can be included in this category. Figures such as Harischandra, Draupadî and the Pândava brothers are considered as models of proper behavior and conduct for the Hindus. These figures are constantly idealized in the Hindu tradition. These mythological figures are seen lifted and incorporated in the ginâns. For example, in one of the small ginâns of Pîr Shams, the figure of Draupadî, is carried over from the Hindu tradition, where she is a model of chastity and righteousness, into the Ismâ'îlî tradition, where she

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becomes the model of an ideal believer who sacrifices herself for the sake of religion.[59]

ii> The second category of the ginâns are those that deal with cosmological and eschatological theories. Here again we find a variety of theories both from Hinduism and Islam. For instance, in the ginân "Âd unâd kî vâṇî", a Hindu cosmological theory is incorporated within the Ismâʿîlî frame work.[60] In yet another ginân "Dhan dhan sâmî Râjo Tu Sîrjanhâr", an Islamic theory has been utilized. Both these are attributed to the authorship of Pîr Shams al-Dîn.[61]

iii> The third category would include ginâns which are moral and ethical in nature, aimed at instructing converts from Hinduism to lead a moral and religious life. The ginâns 'So Kriyâ' a hundred obligatory acts, 'Bâwan Bodh' or fifty two advices can be included in this category.[62]

iv> The fourth category includes those ginâns meant to be sung on specific occasions, such as Navrûz, the ascension of an Imâm, Milâd al-Nabî or for certain religious ceremonies such as ghaṭ-pâṭ.[63]

v> The fifth and the last category includes those ginâns which are mystical in nature. The ginâns belonging to this category deal with mystical relation-ships to be developed between the Lord and a murîd. This is exemplified

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in the ginâns as a spiritual relation-ship between the Imâm and a mûrid, who as we have seen above, according to the post-Alamût developed concept of Imâmah, stands in fundamental spiritual relation-ship with a murîd.

In this category, one comes across theories similar to those found in both şûfî and Hindu mystical traditions. The fundamental emphasis of these mystical compositions, as mentioned above, is on the establishment of a personal and interior relation-ship between the Imâm and a murîd, in order that the latter might attain the divine vision <darśan>. For to attain the divine vision of the Lord is equated with the attainment of mokşa <liberation> from human life on earth. The ginâns of this category, therefore, describe the path a murîd would have to traverse in order to attain the vision of the Lord and contain instructions of how to attain it. To this category belong the Bujh Niranjan and the Brahm Prakâsh.''

And it is to the Brahm Prakâsh, that we now turn our attention. Chapter II offers a translation of the text of the Brahm Prakâsh into English. Chapter III focusses on analysis of the Brahm Prakâsh.

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Notes to Chapter I

[1]B. Lewis, The Assassins, <London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967>, 36.

[2]For details on the significance of the Qiyâmah event both from the doctrinal as well as historical point of view see M.G.M. Hodgson, The Order of the Assassins, <The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1955>, 148-159.

[3]H. Corbin, "Divine Epiphany and Spiritual Birth in Ismailian Gnosis," in Papers from Eranos Yearbooks, Vol.V, Bollingen Series, XXX, <New York: Pantheon Books>, 127-128.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., 95.

[6]A.Nânjî, The Nizârî, 107.

[7]H. Corbin, "Divine Epiphany, 74.

[8]Ibid.

[9]W. Ivanow, Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismâ'îlism, <Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1952>, 47.

[10]A. Nânjî, The Nizârî, 108.

[11]H. Corbin, "Divine Epiphany, 129.

[12]The Nizârî da'wa came to be characterized as the da'wa al-jadîd <new da'wa> in contrast to the da'wa al-qadîm <old da'wa> of the Fâṭimids which confined in Cairo after the schism.

[13]For details see, M.G.M. Hodgson, "The Ismâ'îlî State," in The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 5, edited by J. A. Boyle, <Cambridge: At the University Press, 1968>, 465-466.

[14]W. Ivanow, "The Sect, 22.

[15]The sectarian accounts of the Indian Ismâ'îlîs would broadly comprise two sources: a> the orally transmitted tradition which the Ismâ'îlîs themselves maintain concerning the history of their own pîrs. During the last few decades a new literature in Gujaratî has sprung up by the Ismâ'îlîs themselves attempting to explain the history of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs. Such for instance are the Khôjâ Komno Itîhâs <1908>, a History of the Khôjâs, by Jaffer Rahimtoola Kadru; Momîn Komno Itîhâs <Bombay, 1936>, a History of Imâm Shâhîs, by Miyanji Noormahomed Roohkash; "Ismaili" <a Bombay weekly>,

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by Ali Mahomed Janmahomed Chunara and Noorun Mubin <Bombay, 1936> by the same author.

The significance of these works lie in the incorporation of hitherto unrecorded oral tradition.

b> a large body of religious literature, the ginâns of which we have dealt in details further below in this chapter.

[16]J. N. Hollister, The Shia, 351.

[17]A. Nânjî, The Nizârî, 60-61.

[18]A. Chunara, Noorun Mubin, Revised by Jaffarali Muhammad Sufi, Third edition, <Bombay: Ismailia Association for India, 1951>, 215-216.

[19]J. N. Hollister, The Shia, 351.

[20]W. Ivanow, "Satpanth, 6-8.

[21]Ibid., 11.

[22]J. N. Hollister, The Shia, 333.

[23]Aziz Ahmad, An Intellectual History of Islam in India, <Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964>, 24-25.

[24]"Satveṇijî Vel," in Imâm Shâh na ginânno, Published by Mukhî Lâljî Devrâj, n.d., verse no.72.

[25]A. Nânjî, The Nizârî, 62-63.

[26]Ibid., 64.

[27]W. Ivanow, "Shams Tabrez of Multan," in Professor Muhammad Shafi Presentation Volume, edited by S.M. Abdullah, <Lahore: Majlis-e-Armughan-e-Ilmi, 1955>, 116.

[28]"Surbhâṇ," in Pîr Shams na Grantho, Published by Mukhî Lâljî Devrâj, n.d., verse no.5.

[29]"Chandrabhâṇ," in Pîr Shams na Grantho, Published by Mukhî Lâljî Devrâj, n.d., verse no.6.

[30]A. Nânjî, The Nizârî, 63.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid., 65.

[33]Ibid., 64.

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[34]G. Khakee, "The Dasa Avatara as Linguistic, 44.

[35]M. Hidayetullah, Kabîr: The Apostle of Hindu-Muslim Unity, <Delhi: Jainendra Press, 1977>, 45.

[36]the term "Khwâja" means "the honorable or worshipped converts". For details on the term and its usage, see K. B. Fazalullah, Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. IX, part 2, <1899>, 36-49.

[37]J. N. Hollister, The Shia, 357.

[38]A. Nânjî, The Nizârî, 85.

[39]J. N. Hollister, The Shia, 362.

[40]Ali Asani, "The Ismâ'îlî ginân Literature: Its Structure and Love-Symbolism," <Honours Essay submitted to Harvard University, 1977>, 15.

[41]W. Ivanow, "The Sect, 43.

[42]W. Ivanow, "Satpanth, 20.

[43]Ibid., 18.

[44]Ibid., 24.

[45]G. Khakee, "The Dasa Avatara of Pir Shams as Linguistic, 46.

[46]A. Schimmel, "Reflections on Popular Muslim Poetry," Contributions to Asian Studies, Vol. 17<1984>, 18.

[47]W. Ivanow, "Satpanth, 27.

[48]See B. Walker, "Knowledge" in The Hindu World: An Encyclopaedic Survey of Hinduism, <New York: Frederik A. Praeger, 1968>, Vol.I, 555.

[49]W. Ivanow, Guide, 174-181.

[50]It is maintained by the Nizârî community that ginâns were composed till the turn of this century. The last composer is said to be Sayyidna Imâm Begûm, who lived in Karachi. After her death in early 1940's the composition process ceased and the ginân corpus was frozen.

[51]Ali Asani, "The Ismâ'îlî ginân, 13.

[52]Ibid.

[53]A. Nânjî, The Nizârî, 20.

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[54]Ibid.

[55]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, <Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974>, 62.

[56]B. Walker, Hindu World, Vol. II, 266.

[57]for this section we have drawn freely upon Ali Asani, "The Ismâ'îlî ginân, particularly, 13-18.

[58]Ibid., 14.

[59]Shia Imami Ismailia Association for India, A Collection of Ginâns by the Great Saint Pîr Shams, Bombay, 1952.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid.

[62]for listing of these ginâns see, W. Ivanow Guide, 174-81.

[63]the term is a compound of two Sanskrit words ghaṭ and pâṭ. At present time in the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî ritual, ghaṭpâṭ, refers to a ceremony where a vessel containing holy water is placed on a paṭ or a low table. After prayers the Ismâ'îlîs partake of this holy water.

Numerous references to this ceremony of ghaṭpâṭ, also known as pâval signifying that which purifies, are found in the ginâns. The Persian term âb-i-Ṣafa <water of purity> is also used by the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs.

[64]The text of the Bujh Niranjan is published by the Shia Ismailia Association for India, in "Pavitra Ginânno Sanghra," Bombay, 1962. For an interesting thesis on Bujh Niranjan worked upon recently see Ali Asani, "Bujh Niranjan: A Critical Edition of a Mystical Poem in Hindustani with its Khojki and Gujarati Recensions," <Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1984>.

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CHAPTER II

A Translation of the ginân Brahm Prakâsh <Divine Illumination>

The sat śabda <True Word> is our guru <master>,
the world does not recognise it. 1

Reflect on the sat śabda,
utter pîrshâh frequently. 2

Meditate through the tongue first,
recite pîrshâh pîrshâh day and night. 3

For three months it stays upon the tongue,
then gets absorbed in what is named Brahm. 4

On uttering the Name, love sets ablaze,
Thence emerges self-conviction. 5

Say! O brother, what kind of love is this,
I shall reveal the hidden secret for you. 6

Overwhelmed, the ripple of love arises,
In that state the sweetness of the mouth escapes. 7

It oozes out at the intimation of ensuing love,
In the midst of that state, the mind gets absorbed. 8

As the current of love moves along its <the mind's> banks,
captivated by love, he gets intoxicated. 9

Astonishingly he babbles and his speech becomes dauntless,
this is the sign of having reached farther. 10

In what manner, can I extol the 'divine bliss',
Its majesty is greater than which can ever be expressed. 11

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He who relates from books and leaflets,
will not have access to that bliss. 12

A matted hair mendicant impressing himself as a
bhagvân <divine>,
that bliss remains hidden from him. 13

A mendicant applying ashes and possessing no material
assets,
he did not even brush the surface of the secret to
that bliss. 14

Being an ascetic, yet not immersed in asceticism,
that bliss remains concealed from him. 15

Worshipping to the jaňgam <Hindu deity> day and night
and keeping devout faith in it, will never attain that
bliss. 16

Attaining bodily immortality, yet not comprehending its
value,
Say, how will he have access to that bliss? 17

Perfoming sixty-eight pilgrimages and bathing the
body for purification,
he will not have heard of that bliss. 18

The pious one performing the six important sacrificial
rites,
<Yet> that bliss remains distinct from him. 19

Nurtured by milk alone, a Saivite hermit,
without that bliss, his physical body is desolate. 20

Worshipping stones, ringing bells,
those will not <even> dream of that bliss. 21

Singing and playing loud on instruments,
those did not realize the value of that bliss. 22

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Carrying volumes of books for many people to notice ,
without that bliss, they remained worthless. 23

All the literates become vain for their accomplishments,
<they> became oblivious of the path itself to that bliss. 24

Attaining bodily immortality through medicinal herbs,
those will never attain that bliss. 25

Many prepare medicinal water,
those did not discriminate the austerity toward
that bliss. 26

Many play fair and foul dramas,
in the name of that bliss, merely satiated their
material desires. 27

Spreading witch-craft and sorcery successfully,
that bliss remains distinct from him. 28

Founding assemblies, making himself the excellent one,
he did not attain the assets of that bliss. 29

Performing ten million horse-sacrifices,
he will not discover the dwelling abode of that bliss. 30

He who buries his body alive into the earth,
he forgot the passage itself to that bliss. 31

He who forsake taste and consumed roots,
he did not obtain the taste of that bliss. 32

Digging a cave and burying himself into the earth,
he also did not attain this bliss. 33

Balancing into the air and burying into the earth,
both the means prove useless, if that bliss is not
achieved. 34

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One who goes to Kashi and tortures himself,
he will not have obtained the least knowledge
of that bliss. 35

Going to the Himalayas to bury his limbs,
he could not bury himself into that bliss. 36

One who scorches his own self,
the subject of that bliss remains unique to him. 37

One who becomes a roaming derwish and explores
portions of the earth,
thât bliss remains farther remote to him. 38

He who is fortunate in life and He who has material plenty,
without reciting One Name, that bliss remains
distinct from him. 39

I showed to you, the asceticism of those who did
not attain,
now, I shall explain to you of those who have attained. 40

Siva, Sankâdik attained that bliss,
and liberated themselves from the cycle of coming
and going. 41

Sûkhadev, Vyâsa merged into the bliss,
they will never fall into the cycle of returning. 42

Dhruva, Pralhâd merged into that bliss, and relieved
themselves from the bondage of eighty-four cycles of
rebirth. 43

Kabîr, the slave and Râmânanda the master,
attained that bliss and rejoiced in it. 44

Nâmdev after attaining that bliss,
fulfilled his mission absolutely. 45

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Pipa, Dhannâ and Rohidâs,
attaining that bliss made it their abode. 46

And Nânak Shâh attained,
he attained it by concentrating on the One Name alone. 47

Viśan, Surijan and Mâdhavdâs,
all made their dwelling into that bliss. 48

Dâdû, Rajab, Parsa and Gîyânî,
attained that bliss only through firm meditation. 49

Raňka, Vaňka, Kalu and Kuňbhâ,
they also drowned themselves in that bliss. 50

Khetâ, Gaţte, Sajnâ and Sena also,
immersed themselves into that bliss. 51

Agar, Kîlijan and Tulsî attained,
they also found themselves in harmony with that bliss. 52

Morardâs and Maluk jaňgî,
they were also in harmony with that bliss. 53

Haridâs and the humble Bajindâ,
they also merged in the current of that bliss. 54

That same bliss Esar Tuňbar attained,
uttering the name, absorbed himself into it. 55

The philosophers and the ascetics,
by attaining that bliss became fortunate. 56

That bliss Gorakh attained undoubtedly,
understanding asceticism earned the reward
of his austerities. 57

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The ascetics, Gopîchand and Bharthari,
they were also fortunate to attain that bliss. 58

All who attained were revealed to you,
Yet, there is no end to those who attain. 59

In innumerable eras those who contemplated on the Name
found themselves in harmony with that bliss. 60

Now for six months the meditation is centered
in the 'heart',
every breath repeatedly contemplating just One Name. 61

One day greets with astonishment,
'easily' the meditation reaches the 'navel'. 62

For nine months the Name is held,
in the same state of meditation and in the same abode of
happiness. 63

From the 'west', it begins to rise upwards toward the
'sky',
reaching there witnesses an incomprehensible show. 64

Without rain where the sky thunders,
without a visible place where one dwells. 65

Without clouds where it rains,
where dwells a 'person' without a human form. 66

Say, in what manner does the sky thunder?
Say, how does one dwell without a dwelling? 67

Say, in what manner does it rain?
Say, in what way does a 'person' dwell without a
human form? 68

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In an awful <anâhata> unconstrained manner, the sky thunders,
the mind sits at the trio place <trikutî>. 69

In the sukhmanâ the rain trickles,
where dwells the 'faultless' without a human form. 70

There is no trumpet, yet there is a melody!
there is no sun, yet it is bright! 71

There is no source for a river, yet there flows the Ganges!
there is no inmate, yet there is a friend! 72

Say! what would you call a melody?
Say! what is this brightness? 73

Say! what would you call the Ganges?
Say! whom would you call a friend? 74

Where the trumpet strikes anâhata nâda,
where the sun rays radiate sharply. 75

The creation is in the sukhmanâ ganga,
where the surati śabda unite together. 76

And I can talk of the world easily,
<but> the significance of that place cannot be expressed. 77

Indivisible śabda cannot be impaired,
day and night remains in its pristine form. 78

Immortal śabda never ceases,
becoming surati, is absorbed in the śabda. 79

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Incomprehensible śabda held through meditation,
'easily' the burden of salvation is resolved. 80

Immortal śabda I say, never perishes,
uniting with Brahm assumes immortality. 81

Timeless śabda is where there is no bondage of time,
day and night, surati is absorbed in it. 82

Indivisible śabda visualised in meditation,
he terminates the process of coming and going. 83

Unwritten śabda expressed throught asceticism,
due to surati, <he> attains the fruits of salvation. 84

Unshaken śabda, nothing can tilt it,
the śabda is immeasurable, who can then weigh it? 85

The unfathomable śabda, who can find its limit?
the śabda is boundless, who can estimate its depth? 86

Where the surati śabda dwells,
there is neither the earth nor the sky. 87

When the surati śabda overpowers, <unmani> mind,
then the fear of life and death vanishes. 88

Where the iṅgalâ, piṅgalâ and the sukhmanâ
arteries run,
there the śabda unites with them. 89

One who perceives the śabda within the limits of the
human form,
did not understand the meaning of surati śabda. 90

The surati śabda unites in a knot
just as water merges into water. 91

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Even if in a moment death occurs,
the knot of the surati śabda will never break. 92

The word perceived as 'faultless' by anyone,
will not then perceive it in the limits of
physical vision. 93

The śabda cannot be perceived through physical vision,
those who try to visualize, do not have the eyes
for the śabda. 94

The Creator and the Doer of Ours,
Who is seen as the all-Pervading One. 95

The Lord <saheb> distinct from everyone,
meets only those fewer ascetics through their asceticism. 96

Whoever visualizes the 'faultless' in such a manner,
frees himself from the bonds of perpetual returns to
the earth. 97

Where the nectar trickles forth,
in the happy abode of the sukhmanâ, he plays
in the bliss. 98

In the sukhmanâ bliss, the surati gets absorbed,
and he speaks without fear. 99

Everybody comprehends the external experience,
none comprehend the paracâ <divine experience>. 100

Why is there apprehension for the divine experience?
without himself being revealed of it, who can
grasp the divine secret? 101

Where the tide of happiness is at its height,
there amidst the Brahm he gets absorbed. 102

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One's mind gets absorbed in his own inner most self,
then, the pain to be cast again in the womb does
not arise. 103

In his inner most self, he sees his own self,
he, then, attains immortality existing. 104

What can I talk about the excellent one's inner self!
Anything I utter puts my mind to shame. 105

The alert eyes will discover the jewel,
the ignorant will not bring faith. 106

If the diamond is tied in a knot,
what does it matter, if the ignorant believes or not? 107

Without having heard, I related what I personally
experienced,
I simplified and explained to you. 108

The way I attained, so I explained,
before reaching, I did not believe in its reality. 109

Whoever wanders through the three worlds,
without reciting One Name will never attain salvation. 110

The name of the Lord is enchanting and affectionate,
it is the boat to cross the great ocean. 111

Whoever practices the way I explained,
will recite 'thou' 'thou' in one flow. 112

Day and night if one recites 'thou alone',
will inevitably traverse the great ocean. 113

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Whoever recites the Name of the Lord,
that slave will attain the Lord himself. 114

Life is squandered in vain, without reciting the Name,
Contemplation makes his life worthwhile. 115

He who eliminates pride whilst meditating on the Name,
eliminates for himself accounting for his actions of the
three ages. 116

All those who have contemplated, and are contemplating,
even if they be of low-caste will be amongst
the elevated. 117

In the Sat yuga, Tretâ yuga,
Dvâpara yuga,
And in the fourth the Kali yuga, I say, my brothers. 118

The ascetics who are liberated or will be liberated,
will have done by eliminating pride and praying to
the Reality. 119

The Lord has innumerable Names,
whoever forsakes slander and recollects, is a
real saint. 120

The Agam - Nigam <sacred Vedas>, the Purâna <Hindu
mythological texts>, the Qur'ân,
and Nânak also extols the glory of the Lord. 121

The Lord alone knows his own essence,
the wisdom of Reality is perceived by none. 122

In a fraction of a second, He creates the universe,
and in a fraction absorbs the universe again. 123

The wisdom of the Reality can never be written,
listen, O believers, O! my brothers. 124

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Eliminate all other doubts from the self,
and engrave just One Name within. 125

While meditating do not drift in other thoughts,
restraining deviation, meditate on the Name firmly. 126

Meditating on the Name, <he> attains the Named,
annihilating the self replaces the self. 127

In yourself, you will hold the all-Pervading One,
the body, the universe will be overwhelmed. 128

The 'attributeless' has many attributes,
if you comprehend and see, one supercedes the other. 129

The formless Reality takes a form and descends,
This is liked by the lovers of the Lord. 130

Innumerable eras and days passed,
In these souls were liberated, who overcame ignorance. 131

Extolling his glory,
One can never exhaust it. 132

In the Sat yuga, he manifested into four forms,
four saints reached the heights. 133

Listen, O my brothers, Pralhâd the redeemer of
five crores,
was of this era who attained liberation. 134

In the Tretâ, he manifested into three forms,
Harischandra was the true one to attain the heights. 135

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In the Dvâpara, he manifested into two forms,
the redeemer of nine crores Pândava recognised him. 136

In the Kali yuga he has taken the form of a Naklanki,
of all the souls, he is the sole ruler. 137

One day he will play a trick,
and will put an end to all deceit and fraud in the
world. 138

When Imâm Mahdî extends his protection,
twelve crores and innumerable souls will then attain
liberation. 139

The attributes of the attributeless are too heavy,
He is the sole enacter of his own drama. 140

Shams Dariyâ, searches the river,
and preaches in the form of a derwish. 141

The manner various people comprehend,
he explains to them in a manner comprehensible to them. 142

Shams, the master, discloses the secret,
only the true believers attain the Lord. 143

Whatever has happened, is happening and will
continue to happen,
the world worship the 'gurnar' alone. 144

This is why I related about Him,
for whoever remains with the Lord. 145

They will all witness the Omnipresence of Alî,
whoever searches the Brahm Gyân <divine light>. 146

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He will develop firm conviction,
he who engrosses in attaining the knowledge of
the Divine. 147

Whoever studies, understands and meditates on the Name,
that believer attains paradise. 148

This is the essence of the true path,
Shams Dariya has related and explained. 149

May the Lord fulfill everyone's desire,
prays the person who related to the people
the 'knowledge of the divine'. 150

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Chapter III

Brahm Prakâsh, An Analysis

section <a>

Background to the Tantric Tradition

The two ginâns, the Brahm Prakâsh <Divine Illumination> and the Bujh Niranjan <Knowledge of the Attributeless Deity> that we mentioned in the previous chapter deal with a similar theme which is highly mystical and spiritual in nature. The Khôjâs view both these ginâns as directives for a murîd's spiritual progress on the spiritual path. These ginâns include description of mystical 'stages' and 'states' and contain instructions on how to attain them.

But, while the Bujh Niranjan is composed in a şûfî vein, dealing with mystical stages and experience similar to those contained in şûfî manuals, the Brahm Prakâsh, appears to find its basis in an indigenous Indian religious phenomenon, the Tantric tradition.[1] The technical terms which describe the mystical stages in the Brahm Prakâsh are similar to those dealt with in the Tantric esoteric teachings. Although, it would be interesting to draw parallels between the two approaches - the Brahm Prakâsh and the Bujh Niranjan -

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chiefly because of their representing a single tradition, our study focusses on the Brahm Prakâsh itself, one of the reason being, a recent study on the Bujh Niranjan questions the Ismâ'îlî origins of the ginân itself.[2] If this is true, then the Brahm Prakâsh would be the only other long composition available in the corpus in which the mystical theme of contemplation has been dealt with in an elaborated and in a consistent manner. More important, the key Tantric terms which form the basis of the Brahm Prakâsh are found used in several other ginâns in the corpus.[3] A study of the Brahm Prakâsh will, therefore, not only aid in obtaining an overall understanding of what the Tantric terms imply in the ginâns, but will also determine to what extent Tantrism has found expression in the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî system of thought in the Indian Sub-continent.

Our aim in this chapter is, therefore, to examine the nature of the relation-ship between the Tantric tradition and the ginân tradition of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs. However, our intention is not to deal in detail with either of them, but will be limited to examining those aspects of Tantric tradition which appear to find similar expressions in the ginâns. It is essential to take into consideration the Tantric background, as the key terms used in the Brahm Prakâsh to express mystical stages and experience appear to be a part of the elaborated Yoga discipline, namely the Haṭha Yoga of the Tantric tradition. Hence, we will discuss

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primarily the Haṭha Yoga framework. Then on the Haṭha Yoga basis, we shall attempt to explain how the mystical experience is expressed in the ginâns, specifically in the Brahm Prakâsh. First, however, a short note on the Tantric tradition is appropriate.

Tantrism - a pan Indian phenomenon of extreme complexity - is essentially a Yoga discipline <sâdhanâ-śastra>.[4] It appears that this Yoga tradition had been popularized in northern India at least from the 10th century, initially in its Buddhistic form and later in its Śaivite form by the Sahajiyâ Siddhas and the Nâth-panthî Yogîs. Both the Siddhas and the Nâth Yogîs were propagators and exponents of some form of Haṭha Yoga which had its origins in Mahâyâna Buddhism.[5] It was apparently through the Nâth Yogîs, the Śaivite counter-parts of the Siddhas, that the Tantric tradition and some of its esoteric jargon spread in the northern and the central parts of the Indian Sub-continent during the medieval era.

These Nâth Yogîs are also known as Gorakh Nâth Yogîs, after the name of their foremost Guru Gorakhnâth and also as kânphaṭa Yogîs on account of their split ears.[6] Although the dates of Gorakhnâth cannot be ascertained, scholars agree that he may have lived between the 9th and 12th centuries in northern Punjab.[7] It is alleged that it was from this period that the Nâth Yogîs achieved popularity. The influence of

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these Nâth Yogîs appears to have been quite profound during the medieval era on the emerging mystical traditions both among the Hindus and the Muslims. Among the Hindus two mystical traditions namely, the Bhakti and the Sant tradition are alleged to have been affected by the Gorakhnâth panthîs. C. Vaudeville maintains that the so-called nirguṇî Bhakti, whose chief exponent was Kabîr, appears to be so heavily indebted to the Nath-panthî form of Yoga that the sayings of some of the Sants such as Guru Nânak, Nâmdev etc. can hardly be understood without referring to the Nath-panthî esoteric vocabulary.[8]

Similarly, the ṣûfîs, especially those belonging to the Chistîyya and the Shattârî Orders, seem to have found compatability of ṣûfî doctrines with those of Nâth-panthîs. This is evidenced by the writings of some of the ṣûfîs of the medieval period which show a marked influence of Nâth-panthî thought in them.' Likewise, examining the ginâns, we find a large portion of their mystical structure to reflect Nâth-panthî esoteric jargon. There are numerous references in the ginâns to terms such as jogî, abadhu <avadhûta>, titles of Nâth Yogîs. The liberal use of their terms indicate that Tantrism has sufficiently found expression in the ginân literature of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs.

The ginân Brahm Prakâsh, besides using the key Tantric terms to express the mystical experience, which itself

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suggests a connection between the two traditions, also makes references to several personalities. The ginân mentions them as those having received the mystical experience by having following the spiritual path as outlined in the Brahm Prakâsh.[10] Personalities such as Kabîr, Guru Nânak, Bhartari, Gopî, Nâmdev etc., mentioned in the ginân are those belonging to the Sant tradition who are alleged to have had been either disciples of Gorakhnâth or to have come into contact with Gorakhnâth.[11] The Brahm Prakash mentions Gorakhnâth as one who has liberated himself:

> That bliss Gorakh attained undoubtedly,
> Understanding asceticism earned the
> reward of his austerities.[12]

Besides the Brahm Prakâsh, references to Gorakhnâth are also found in a few other places in a ginân attributed to the same pîr.[13] There is no possibility, however, of ascertaining whether Shams al-Dîn, the Nizârî pîr to whom is attributed the ginân Brahm Prakâsh, had any direct connection with Gorakhnâth himself. But the similarities found in their works certainly indicate a link between the two traditions which seems to have begun with Shams al-Dîn and carried on till recently since the ginâns composed by the last author, Sayyidnâ Imâm Begum, strongly reflect Tantric jargon. Hence, we shall proceed to examine the Haṭha Yoga of the Nath-panthî cult.

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Haṭha Yoga or kuṇḍalinî-śakti Yoga

As mentioned above, Haṭha Yoga is believed to have developed from the 7th century onwards as a kind of off-shoot of Mahâyâna Buddhism which has gradually impregnated most schools of popular devotion, both Vedântic and Buddhistic.[14] The word Haṭha is formed of two words, ha means the sun <sûrya> and ṭha, the moon <chandrama>; their union is called Yoga. The word signifies, however, 'difficult Yoga' since extremely strenuous bodily exercises and difficult postures of body are usually <although not always> associated with it.[15]

The basic conception behind the Yoga practices is identical in all the Tantric schools. The aim of a Yogî, whether Buddhist or Śaivite is to attain sahaja -a Supreme, transcendent state. The sahaja state, a Yogî maintains, is to be attained within the body itself, since the human body is conceived as a microcosm, wherein all spiritual truth is to be 'realized'. To realize the sahaja state, therefore, primarily requires an understanding of the human body and its esoteric aspects. Secondly a sâdhanâ <practise> as an aid in the 'realization' of sahaja within the human body. Through the sâdhanâ, a Yogî is said to attain the sahaja state, which is equated with the attainment of bodily immortality.[16]

As the Nâth-panthî Yogîs are Śaivites, their form of

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Haṭha Yoga is characterized by the prominence attached to Śakti, the female energy of the Supreme Divinity Śiva.[17] In this form of Haṭha Yoga, Śakti is worshipped as the active female principle, whereas the male principle, represented by Śiva, is viewed as inactive. The Nâth-panthî sâdhanâ is aimed at realizing the union of Śiva and Śakti, which is 'sahaja' for them. Basing themselves on the general Tantric frame-work, the Nâth Yogîs maintain that the union is to be realized within the body itself.

In order to realize this merging, the Haṭha Yoga lays emphasis on the kuṇḍalinî <serpent> power, identified with Śakti. It is pointed out that kuṇḍalinî is that part of Haṭha Yoga in which the creative sustaining Śakti of the whole body is actually and truly united with the Lord of consciousness, i.e.Śiva.[18] For this reason Haṭha Yoga is also called kuṇḍalinî-śakti Yoga. The essential feature of this Yoga is that it requires the help of a mantra, 'word' or 'spell' for its success.[19] However, as the kuṇḍalinî and the mantra play a vital role in the human body itself, the peculiar 'geography' of the body and its esoteric aspects form the basis of Haṭha Yoga both in theory and practice.[20]

Accordingly, the main axis of the human body is the spinal cord called meru-daṇḍa <by analogy with Mount-Meru, considered as the pivot of the universe>. Along the meru-daṇḍa are super-imposed a series of chakras

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<nerve-plexuses> in the shape of lotuses. These chakras are popularly considered to be six in all.[21] They are regarded as centres of vital forces. Hence they become objects of concentration in themselves, and in them are to be discovered the mysteries of creation. Each chakra is in itself conceived as a state of 'bliss' or of ecstatic experience.

Thus, the first chakra and the lowest of all is the mûlâdhâra-chakra, situated at the extreme end of the meru-daṇḍa, which is between the anus and the genitals; whilst the sixth called the âjñâ-chakra is situated between the eyebrows; above it stands a cavity within the skull. The top of the skull is occupied by the sahasrâra - the thousand petalled chakra, also known as gagana-maṇḍala.[22] This gagana-maṇḍala is also called the 'moon', since it is a receptacle of ambrosia <amṛta>, which oozes from its pericap. It is conceived as the dwelling place of Param-Śiva or the Supreme Being. To reach the gagana-maṇḍala is the goal of a Yogî, as the attainment of this stage is equated with the attainment of sahaja and bodily immortality.[23]

Furthermore, the human body is said to contain thousands of nâḍîs <arteries> which are essentially channels of vital breaths.[24] Out of these, three nâḍîs in particular play an important role in the Haṭha Yoga. The iḍâ or iṅgalâ and piṅgalâ are situated on the left and the right sides of the meru-daṇḍa. Iḍâ and piṅgalâ, through which the 'two main

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breaths are moving, are identified as the 'sun' <sûrya> and the 'moon' <chandrama> and as the Gangâ and the Yamunâ rivers respectively.[25] Suşumnâ or Sukhmanâ, the third channel is deemed the most important. It is identified with the spinal cord or more properly as the inner most extremely narrow channel situated within the spinal cord. It is said to extend from the mûlâdhâra, that is, the lowest point of the meru-daṇḍa to the vacumm below the hole of the sahasrâra in the skull.[26] Iḍâ, piṅgalâ and the sukhmanâ are said to have their source in the lowest chakra and to meet finally in the sahasrâra. The confluence of these three nâḍîs in the skull is known as triveṇî.[27] It is claimed by the Yogîs that "he who bathes at that sacred confluence reaches to the highest place and attains mokşa <salvation>."[28]

In this peculiar geography of the Haṭha Yoga, the cosmic energy, considered the vital energy, is conceived as a female snake, the kuṇḍalinî, the coiled one; so called because she is said to remain coiled in the lowest chakra, where she is in a dormant state.[29] The various exercises pertaining to the technique of Haṭha Yoga aim at waking up the kuṇḍalinî-śakti and at forcing her upwards along the meru daṇḍa through the central channel known as sukhmanâ. In her progress upwards, the kuṇḍalinî aims to reach the sahasrâra. Reaching to this highest point, the kuṇḍalinî unites with

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Param-Śiva, in the gagana-maṇḍala. Here, the efforts of the Yogî are rewarded : he is able to drink the ambrosia juice, and he attains mahâsûkha or 'supreme bliss' which is the supreme sahaja state.[30]

However, the activation of the kuṇḍalinî, essentially requires the flow of iṅgalâ and piṅgalâ in one direction, so that they unite with the sukhmanâ in the triveṇî. This regulation of the breath, according to the Nâth Yogîs needs a mantra for its sâdhanâ. A mantra is a 'spell' or a 'word'. According to C. Vaudeville, the Yogîc mantras or spells are composed of phonemes called bîja, 'germ-syllables' or akṣara, 'potent syllables', each of which is endowed with a particular energy.[31] When repeated outwardly and inwardly, the bîja mantras reproduce the mysterious state that they express. The repetition of this mantra is called jâpa. But jâpa as merely a repetition <uccara> is not fruitful except as a beginner's exercise.

The jâpa becomes meaningful when it is interiorized as smaraṇa or sumiran, memorization, which is called ajâpajâpa or silent jâpa. The Nâths pay special respect to the sacred syllable haṁ-sa, which according to them is the perfect jâpa[32]. The intention behind ajâpajâpa is to curb the wandering mind and achieve total concentration on the mantra itself. Hence the mantra itself is the chief focus of the Nâth Yogîs. Once the jâpa becomes ajâpajâpa, the activation

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of the kuṇḍalinî begins.

The kuṇḍalinî is lifted through smaraṇa of the mantra from the place where she lies coiled up in the mûlâdhâra, the lowest base. The aim is to make the kuṇḍalinî reach the sahasrâra. But to reach the highest state, the various chakras are involved. These chakras, as mentioned above, are super-imposed on the meru-daṇḍa. Thus, they all lie in the path of the kuṇḍalinî as she passes through them on her way upwards through the sukhmanâ , the central channel of the meru-daṇḍa. Each chakra symbolizies a type of reality, a specific experience or ecstasy, and the fixation on each secures reactions which are interpreted in terms of degrees of spiritual progress attained.[33] At each chakra, the individual soul drinks the nectar of the crescent moon which oozes from the pericap of the sahasrâra.

The whole process of Haṭha Yoga or kuṇḍalinî-śakti Yoga is characterized by a persistent effort directed both toward 'inwardness' and 'upwardness'.[34] Therefore, in Haṭha Yoga emphasis is laid both on strenuous bodily exercises <known as mudrâ, âsana, bandha -appropriate gestures, postures and control methods> which aim at holding all the vital winds within the body and at breathing techniques. The Yogîs maintain that the reversal of the breathing process leads to control and ultimately to the paralysing of the mind <man>. The man is conceived as the controller of the senses. The

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man, therefore, is considered to be the greatest obstacle in the Yogî's progress toward attaining liberation. Through the control of the mind, which the Yogîs call "killing of the mind"- unmani, the Yogî is said to reach the highest state. The unmana or unmani stage, which results from the Yogî's final victory over his enemy, the man co-incides with the attainment of the sahaja state.[3] And this is to be attained by proper breathing techniques. Hence repetition of the mantra plays a significant role in the success of Haţha Yoga practices.

Having outlined the basic frame-work of the Haţha Yoga, an important aspect remains to be considered. How is the experience actualized and what is the nature of the experience. This we shall examine below in the light of the ginân works, chiefly focussing on the Brahm Prakâsh.

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Notes to Chapter III

Section <a>

[1]The Tantric tradition is followed by certain so-called left-hand Hindus and Buddhists. This tradition is believed to have spread during the medieval era in the Indian Sub-continent. For details see below.

[2]Ali Asani, "Bujh Niranjan.

[3]The following is a short list of ginâns found to have been composed within the Tantric frame-work: Avadhûta, <O! jogî make asceticism your begging bowl>; Tame japajo dîn raat ke, <meditate on the jâpa day and night>; Sakhî mahâpad kerî vât, <O friend! few comprehend the significance of that stage>; Sî harfî, <thirty golden words>; Ajampiya tano hardam dhariye dhyân, <Through ajâpajâpa hold every breath>; Hardam karo abhiyas, <Study thyself constantly>; Ajampiya jâpa jena ghat mahe, <Whosoever holds the ajâpajâpa within his self>; jogî so jugâ jug jogî, <He is a true Yogî who has been a Yogî through the ages>.

Besides these, there are numerous allusions to Tantric terms in the ginân corpus. These ginâns are attributed to the authorship of various dâ'îs and pîrs beginning with compositions attributed to Shams al-Dîn until the use of Tantric vocabulary is found in the works attributed to the last of composers, Sayyidnâ Imâm Begum after whom the ginân corpus became frozen. For translations of the above-mentioned ginâns see, Gulam Ali Allana, Ginans of the Ismaili Pirs, <Karachi: Ismailia Association for Karachi, 1984>; and "Some Specimen of Satpanth Literature-The Garbi Songs," translated by Vali Mohamad N. Huda in Collectanea I <1948>, 55-85.

[4]S. A. Rizvi, Alakhbânî or Rushd Nâmâ of Shaykh Abd ul-Quddus Gangohi, in Hindi, <Aligarh: Adarsh Press, 1971>, 117.

[5]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 121.

[6]One of the characteristic features of the Gorakh Nâth Yogîs is the practise of having the cartilege of their ears split. At the time of initiation, as it is alleged to be still in practise, the ear of a novice is split for the insertion of huge ear-rings. It is maintained by the Nâth Yogîs that the ears contain a net-work of nâdîs <arteries> connecting them with the inner organs of perception. The splitting of the ear is believed to open a mystical channel in order to assist in the development of Yogîc powers. See, S.A. Rizvi, The History of Sufism in India, <New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Press, 1978>, 332.

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[7]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 86-87.

[8]Ibid., 120.

[9]Aziz Ahmad, Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment, <Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964>. 137-38.

[10]See our translation of the Brahm Prakâsh above, particularly verses 41-58. Henceforth the translation will be referred to as BP.

[11]See articles on "Gorakhnâth", "Kabîr", "Nânak" etc., in B. Walker, Hindu World, 2 vols.

[12]BP., verse No.57.

[13]Two other references are found in the ginân "Haňs Haňsali ni varta," in Pîr Shams na Grantho, published by Mukhî Lâljî Devrâj, n.d.

[14]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 122.

[15]G.W.Briggs, Gorakhnâth and the Kânphaṭa Yogîs, <Calcutta: Motilal Banarasidass Press, 1973>, 274.

[16]C. Vaudeville, "Kabîr and Interior Religion," History of Religions, Vol.3 II <1964>, 194.

[17]S. A. Rizvi, History of Sufism, 334.

[18]G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnâth, 274.

[19]Ibid.

[20]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 130.

[21]The six centres or chakras are: mûlâdhâra <at the base of the spinal column>; svadhiṣṭhana <at the root of the male organ>; manîkpûraka <in the region of the navel>; anâhata <the heart lotus>; viśuddha <in the throat> and âjñâ <between the eyebrows, within the skull>. The chakras or lotuses are chief characteristic element of Haṭha Yoga. A few of these are referred to in the ginâns as well. For further details see M. Basu, Tantras, A General Study, <Calcutta: India, 1976>, 125-127.

[22]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 130.

[23]Ibid.

[24]G.W.Briggs, Gorakhnâth, 308.

[25]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 131.

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[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., 131-32.

[30]Ibid., 129.

[31]Ibid.

[32]C. Vaudeville explains "The migratory bird haṁ-sa, in Vedic tradition, symbolizes the Supreme Being. In the Tantric Saiva tradition, it represents Siva. But it also, designates the individual soul <jiva> especially in its purified state, when it merges into the Universal soul, paramhaṁ-sa." Kabîr, 129. For details also see, G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnâth, 307.

[33]G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnâth, 322.

[34]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 132.

[35]Ibid.

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Section <b>
Tantric Element in the ginâns,
specifically in the Brahm Prakâsh

In the last section we surveyed the chief characteristic features of Haţha Yoga of the Tantric tradition, for it was maintained that the key technical esoteric terms of this tradition appear similar to those found in the ginân Brahm Prakâsh. It was also maintained that these key terms occur prominently in the entire ginân corpus, which goes to suggest that Tantrism seems to have found expression in the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî system of thought to a large extent. This section, therefore, opens with a look at the basic conceptions outlined in the mystical category of the ginâns, of which the Brahm Prakâsh is seen as a major composition. It then proceeds to examine these conceptions within the context of Haţha Yoga. As we proceed, our study will reveal that the Brahm Prakâsh seems to super-impose a Shî'î form of Islam upon the Haţha Yoga frame-work of the Tantric tradition.

In our discussion on the nature and the structure of ginâns in chapter one above, we classified the ginâns as broadly falling under five categories. It was maintained

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that amongst these, the esoteric aspect of Satpanth or Nizârî Ismâ'îlism largely falls under the fifth category termed as the mystical category of ginâns. The essential feature underlying this category of ginâns, is the development of an interior and personalized form of relation-ship between an individual murîd and the Lord in order to attain the divine vision i.e. union with God.[1] <Mokşa or salvation consists of bringing oneself within this pattern of harmony with God>. This is exemplified in the Ismâ'îlî system by the emphasis on the relation-ship between the spiritual reality of a murîd and the spiritual reality of the Imâm, who, as we have seen above, stands in fundamental relation-ship with an Ismâ'îlî murîd.[2] The culmination of this relation-ship is seen as a spiritual union between the inner reality of a murîd and the inner reality of the Imâm i.e. union with God.[3]

The mystical ginâns are, therefore, primarily expressions at various levels of a spiritual relation-ship between a murîd and the Imâm. This category of ginâns may be further classified into three sub-groups: those ginâns which are seen as guides leading towards the mystical or esoteric path and containing instructions on how to attain it; ginâns which are expressions of mystical experience arising out of

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the establishment of a spiritual relation-ship; and, finally, those ginâns which in popular devotional literature of the Indian Sub-continent are termed as 'lamentations' <giryâzârî> and 'pleas' <venti> of an individual murîd for the attainment of the vision of the Lord.[4]

We are here specifically concerned with the first sub-group of ginâns which basically focus on the realization of mystical experience. They describe the various mystical 'stages' and 'states' which a murîd would experience on the spiritual journey. These ginâns, therefore, act as guides leading a murîd to tread on the esoteric path. The following verses of a short ginân from the corpus offer us a glimpse into the type of relation-ship to be cultivated between a murîd and the Lord:

> Pîr Sadr al-Dîn says,
> Know that the Lord is ever-present;
> the eternal status can be achieved,
> if you encounter the nûr <light> within...
>
> the darśan <vision> can be attained through the vigil,
> when you search for the 'Attributed One'.[5]

This type of references to the path are found in various places in the ginân corpus.[6] However, the Brahm Prakâsh, as a major composition of this category not only outlines the esoteric path implied throughout the ginân corpus but also contains detailed instructions about how to follow it. Hence, we shall focus mainly on the Brahm Prakâsh.[7] It is in

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the discussion of the esoteric path described in the Brahm Prakâsh - the various mystical stages and the resulting ecstatic experience due to the establishment of a spiritual relation-ship between a murîd and the Lord - that reference to the Tantric tradition becomes inevitable. The key terms such as iṅgalâ, piṅgalâ, sukhmanâ etc., used in the text to describe the mystical experience, aş we have seen above, occupy a significant place in the Haţha Yoga theory of the Tantric tradition. Our purpose in the pages below is primarily to outline the underlying theme of the Brahm Prakâsh . The latter portion is devoted to demonstrating the mystical path outlined in the Brahm Prakâsh to determine how have these esoteric terms employed in the ginân and what meaning have they been eventually given in the text.

As the title of the ginân suggests, the Brahm Prakâsh deals with a mystical aspect concerned with the Illuminative knowledge of the divine Lord. The attainment of divine vision by an individual in order to attain mokşa is the central idea on which the Brahm Prakâsh seems to have been based. The text attempts to explain how this vision is acquired by an individual and thereby seeks to guide a murîd from stage to stage of mystical experience to eventual absorption in the unfathomable depths of one's own inner self-hood to experience the divine. The emphasis of the Brahm Prakâsh is on the mystical practise of the sat śabda <True Word> as a means to attaining the vision of the Lord.

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The ginân deals at length with the divine properties of the sat śabda. The sat śabda is presented as being both transcendent and immanent. It is transcendent in the sense that it stretches beyond time and space and is thus formless, not perceived by the power of human intellect. As it states:

> Timeless śabda is where there is no bondage of time,
> day and night, surati is absorbed in it.
>
> The unfathomable śabda, who can find its limit?
> The śabda is boundless, who can estimate its depth?
> ...BP 82,86.

At the same time, the sat śabda is all-Pervading at every level of existence; in particular all the ontological stages of the self are viewed as being overwhelmed by the sat śabda. Hence,in order for a murîd to experience the transcendence and the immanence of the sat śabda, the ginân maintains that the self must be submerged in the sat śabda through contemplation. Consequently it results in the attainment of salvation.

> Incomprehensible śabda held through meditation,
> 'easily' the burden of salvation is resolved.
> ...BP 80.

In other words, the sat śabda itself forms the ultimate focus, the centre around which a murîd's inner energies are organised. For this reason, the sumiran <contemplation> of the sat śabda forms a significant practise which seems to

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underlie the Brahm Prakâsh. Sumiran of the sat śabda or the dhikr of ism â'zam by the ṣûfîs is a means shown in the Brahm Prakâsh through which a murîd is initiated into developing his bâṭini self in order to experience the divine within one's own self-hood. Focussing on this fundamental idea, it discusses at length how the mystical practise of sumiran develops a murîd's inner self and leads him from stage to stage of mystical experience to eventual absorption in the unfathomable depths of one's own inner self hood to experience the divine. Hence, it is the sat śabda which is shown as leading a murîd towards the establishment of a relation-ship between himself and the Lord and which culminates in the realization of the experience of union with the Lord.

As mentioned above, in Satpanth or Nizârî Ismâ'îlism the relation-ship between a murîd and the Lord is exemplified as an establishment of a spiritual relation-ship between the inner reality of a murîd and the inner reality of the Imâm. We shall, therefore, see below how the Brahm Prakâsh characterizes this aspect. A verse in the ginân says:

> Reflect on the śat śabda,
> utter pîrshâh frequently...
>
> ...BP 2.

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The śabda, pîrshâh appears as a dhikr word in almost the entire ginân corpus. Numerous references are found in the ginâns where the pîrs give the jâpa <word> of pîrshâh to the new converts.[8] Pîrshâh literally stands for pîra <guru> and shâh <nara>. Therefore, pîrshâh would be equivalent to gurnar.[9]

In Nizârî Ismâ'îlism, the word pîrshâh is seen as an epithet referring to 'Alî, the first Imâm of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs.[10] Since 'Alî is considered to represent the institution of Imâmah in essence, the word pîrshâh, would then refer to all the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî Imâms.[11] Taken in context the allusion to pîrshâh in the ginâns must necessarily refer to the relation-ship between a murîd and the Imâm. Hence when the ginân states:

> Reflect on the sat śabda
> utter pîrshâh frequently...
>
> ...BP 2.

It implies that as a murîd meditates on the given word which is the Name of the Lord, he, at the height of his spiritual maturity, attains the Named, as it states:

> Meditating on the Name, <he> attains the Named...
>
> ...BP 127.

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Since it is established that the śabda pîrshâh refers to the Imâm, it follows from references to pîrshâh in the text that at the height of his spiritual progress a murîd attains the Named i.e. attains the inner reality of the Imâm. This attainment in the Ismâ'îlî system signifies attaining union with God. However, it remains to be seen how the Brahm Prakâsh establishes the identity of the śabda through the mystical path which it elaborates and how it leads a murîd toward its realization.

In order to actualize this experience of the vision of the Lord within one's own self-hood, the Brahm Prakâsh lays down the practise and contains descriptions of various mystical states and stages in the form of providing instructions to a murîd treading on the esoteric path. The explanation of the mystical path is structured in a curious manner in the ginân. The first 10 verses speak of the practise of the śabda and the resulting ecstasy due to intense concentration on the śabda. Then the ginân suddenly breaks off into describing the uselessness of various so-called ascetic practises which are not centred on the sat śabda. It continues then to name adepts who during the ages have attained the divine bliss due to their focus on the name of the Lord in contemplation. The discussion of the mystical path begins again abruptly from verse no. 61 and culminates

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in discussing the resulting ecstasy and realization of the experience of the divine within one's own inner self-hood. Excluding the intermediate verses i.e. verse 11 to 60, one gets a fair outline of the mystical path illustrated in the Brahm Prakâsh.

Our concern here is to focus on the mystical path as it has been illustrated in the Brahm Prakâsh. As we proceed, we shall see several technical esoteric terms which describe the mystical path and the experience. Although reference to similar esoteric terms is found in several ginâns in the corpus, its meaning is, however not clear. It is important to obtain a clear idea of what is the significance of these various technical terms in the mystical path. As this vocabulary is part of the esoteric vocabulary of the Haţha Yoga theory of the Tantric tradition, reference to the Tantric Yoga becomes inevitable. It appears that the ginân incorporates a similar vocabulary to explain its mystical path in terms of principles similar to those of the Haţha Yoga of the Tantric tradition. The following illustration of the path will, therefore, demonstrate to what extent the ginâns conform to the Haţha Yoga theory and what meaning these key technical terms have been given in the Brahm Prakâsh.[12]

Demonstrating the mystical path, the beginning verses of the Brahm Prakâsh state:

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The sat śabda <True Word> is our guru <master>,
The world does not recognize it.

Reflect on the sat śabda,
Utter pîrshâh frequently.

Meditate through the tongue first,
recite pîrshâh pîrshâh day and night.

For three months it stays upon the tongue,
then gets absorbed in what is named as Brahm...
...BP 1,2,3,4.

The tone of these first few verses is that of exhortation. It says that the sat śabda is our guru <master>, for anything which communicates a vision or a glimpse of reality is considered the task of a guru. Since a guru is the only guide who can lead a murîd on the mystical path towards the realization, the focus should be the guru i.e. the sat śabda itself. This path, it maintains, should be initiated through dhyân <meditation> focussed absolutely on the śabda. Therefore, sumiran of the śabda forms the most significant practise of the mystical path. Indicating the method by which the śabda should be practised, the ginân says that the practise of the śabda is primarily a conscious repetition through the tongue. The verbal repetition is interpreted as a breath upon breath technique.

Such an allusion to the practise of śabda is clearly stated in a ginân from the corpus which says:

Through every breath
meditate on the jâpa of pîrshâh,
meditate constantly...[13]

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After the śabda is repeated constantly it becomes internalized, i.e. it is no longer a conscious repetition but a sub-conscious process, when every breath contemplates the śabda. The internalization of the śabda is referred to as ajâpajâpa or silent repetition. One of the verses in the corpus states:

> O Thee! Hold every breath of meditation
> through ajâpajâpa,
> Hold every breath in meditation
> O thee! Control the mind through meditation,
> focussing on the Satgur...[14]

The objective behind the constant practise of the śabda through every breath is to focus on the śabda, which would control the mind from deviating. Once the dhyân is internalized, it goes down to the heart, as the Brahm Prakâsh states:

> Now for six months, meditation is centred in the 'heart',
> every breath repeatedly contemplating just One Name.
>
> One day greets with astonishment,
> 'easily' the meditation reaches the 'navel'.
>
> For nine months the Name is held,
> in the same state of meditation and in the same abode
> of happiness.
>
> From the 'west' it begins to rise upwards towards
> the 'sky',
> reaching there witnesses an incomprehensible show...
> ...BP 61,62,
> 63,64.

The following verses of the Brahm Prakâsh say that after the śabda is meditated upon verbally, which would take three

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months of practise, it leads a murîd to the second stage as the dhyân is internalized and reaches the heart.[15] Here the śabda, is held through ajâpajâpa, i.e. silent jâpa for six months. And from the heart it goes down to the nâbhi <navel> where the dhyân stays for a period of nine months. It is from nâbhi that the dhyân rises from the 'west' to go towards the 'sky'. In other words, the method which the Brahm Prakâsh suggests is that of 'inwardness' and 'upwardness' of the dhyân.

The mystical stages described in the Brahm Prakâsh appear similar to the chakras, which as intimated earlier, play a significant role in esoteric aspect of the human body according to the Haṭha Yoga theory. To reiterate, in the peculiar geography of the body, the main axis of the human body is the spinal column known as meru-daṇḍa upon which are super-imposed a series of chakras, the lowest and the highest chakra being located on the extreme ends of the meru-daṇḍa. Thus, the heart, the navel or anâhata, nâbhi etc., mentioned in the ginân are various centres in the human body. In the Yoga practise, the aim of a Yogî is to reach the highest point of the meru-daṇḍa. Reaching to this highest stage, a Yogî is said to achieve the sahaja- a state which is equated with attainment of bodily immortality. The various chakras which are super-imposed on the meru-daṇḍa are, therefore, considered stages of progress or indicators of the level of progress achieved.[16]

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In the Tantric Yoga system the aim of a Yogî is to attain sahaja. The vital urge of a Yogî to realize the sahaja is personified in the symbol of a kuṇḍalinî, 'serpent' that lies coiled up at the base of the spinal column. The kuṇḍalinî is viewed as the personification of energy <Śakti> within the human body through which the mystical experience is actualized. The aim of a Yogi in the Tantric system is, therefore to raise the kuṇḍalinî from the place where it lies in a dormant state. Once it is aroused from its sleep, it begins to climb the ladder of the chakras finally to reach the highest chakra and attain sahaja.[17] The whole process of the Haṭha Yoga is to actualize the experience of the kuṇḍalinî. The practise of a Yogî is characterized by a persistent effort both towards 'inwardness' and 'upwardness' to attain sahaja.[18]

It appears that the under-lying principle of the functioning of the kuṇḍalinî-śakti of the Haṭha Yoga forms the basis of the mystical path illusrated in the ginân. For the allusion to the dhyân of a murîd passing internally from stage to stage until it reaches the nâbhi appears to refer to a process similar as the one advocated in the Tantric system. The inwardness of the dhyân is to wake the kuṇḍalinî and force it from where it lies in a dormant state. Similarly the Brahm Prakâsh, leading a murîd on the path, explains that as the śabda is internalized...

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One day greets with ashtonishment,
'easily' the meditation reaches the 'navel'...

For nine months the Name is held,
in the same state of meditation
and in the same abode of happiness...
...BP 62,63.

The stage nâbhi or navel is, therefore, of vital importance where the dhyân reaches and remains for a longer period of time. The importance of this mystical stage is expressed in the following manner in one of the ginâns:

O Thee! Keep the mûl-lotus steady,
and awaken the nâbhi-lotus,
Meditate constantly...[19]

This verse says that the mûl-lotus, also known as mûlâdhâra, the lowest centre should be kept firm, and the attempt should be to awaken the nâbhi. In the Haṭha Yoga the nâbhi is regarded as the centre of the human body.[20] The two main nâḍîs <arteries> iṅgalâ and piṅgalâ considered to be channels of vital breath meet with the suşumnâ or sukhmanâ the central nâḍî in the nâbhi. It is maintained by the Yogîs that the meeting of these three naḍîs in the nâbhi forces the kuṇḍalinî 'upwards' to pierce through the ladder of chakras to eventually experience the divine in the sahasrâra, the highest point of the meru-daṇḍa.[21] Therefore, in the nâbhi itself the dhyân remains until such time that the concentration on the śabda is absolute. Such an intense concentration on the śabda results in uniting the three nâḍîs namely iṅgalâ, piṅgalâ and the sukhmanâ in the nâbhi. This

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merging, as mentioned above, forces the kuṇḍalinî upwards through the ladder of chakra. As the following verse of the ginân maintains:

> From the 'west' it begins to rise upwards towards
> the 'sky',
> reaching there witnesses an incomprehensible show...
> ...BP 64.

No specific reference can be found in the ginâns which shows what the paschim or paccham <west> means in the Brahm Prakâsh. The only allusion is found in a verse from the corpus:

> When it rises from the nâbhi,
> it takes the route of the spinal column,
> the object is to reach the triveṇî,
> which is the opening in the tenth door...[22]

This verse may mean that the dhyân rising from the nâḅhi through the west to reach the sky takes the route of the spinal column. Thus, it is the spinal column which is considered the west path of the inward journey.

Seeing this reference within the Haṯha Yoga theory, the 'west' refers to the suṣumṇâ, the central route of the meru daṇḍa.[23] According to the Haṯha Yoga theory the kuṇḍalinî can ascend through any of the three principle nâḍîs, namely iṅgalâ, piṅgalâ or the sukhmanâ. It is the sukhmanâ which is considered the path of the inward journey. This is because iṅgalâ and piṅgalâ are said to pass round the meru - daṇḍa

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while the sukhmanâ pierces through it and reaches the highest point. It is this route in the spinal column through which the kuṇḍalinî is supposed to travel in order to reach its destination which is in the gagana-maṇḍala. Hence, reference to the west route in the Brahm Prakâsh like-wise alludes to the route of the kuṇḍalinî in the sukhmanâ. Taking the west route it reaches the akaśa, or the sky, and witnesses an 'incomprehensible show'. What the akaśa is and what type of show the person experiences need elaboration. The following verses of the Brahm Prakâsh state:

> From the 'west' it begins to rise upwards
> towards the 'sky',
> reaching there witnesses an incomprehensible show
>
> Without rain where the sky thunders,
> without a visible place where one dwells.
>
> Without clouds where it rains,
> where dwells a 'person' without a human form.
>
> In an awful <anâhata> unconstrained manner,
> the sky thunders,
> the mind sits at the trio place <trikutî>.
>
> There is no trumpet, yet there is a melody!
> there is no sun, yet it is bright!
>
> There is no source for a river, yet there flows
> the Ganges!
> there is no inmate, yet there is a friend!
>
> ...BP 64,65,66
> 69,71,72.

As the dhyân of a murîd rises from the nâbhi, it reaches the akaśa <sky>. Here he is said to experience an inexpressible show. The above verses of thè ginân refer to various types of experiences which are manifested to a murîd

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as he progresses through his dhyân and reaches the akaśa. For instance, various types of sounds are heard. He hears: the sound of a distant river; then a thundering; the sound of a water-fall; then a flute etc. Accompanying this is the experience of seeing a light and the presence of a purukh or person. But before considering what these religious experiences signify, it is essential to know primarily what the akaśa is where the experience is said to occur?

In the Tantric Yoga, once the kuṇḍalinî is aroused, it begins its inward journey up the sukhmanâ. The ascending kuṇḍalinî successively pierces the chakra and reaches the akaśa.[24] Akaśa or vacuum, is the space above the throat, where according to the Tantric system, limitation of the sense is removed. When a Yogî has succeeded in making the kuṇḍalinî reach the highest point, he is said to experience in a vacuum surrounding the brain and the spinal cord known as akaśa.[25]

Associated with the awakening of the kuṇḍalinî are various experiences which are manifested, among others, by different stages of awareness as each chakra is pierced. Among the various reactions which are taken as indicators of success for a Yogî in the Haṭha Yoga theory are certain sounds and colors.[26] Sound called nâda is said to be latent in the body and is supposed to be heard within. Different sounds are heard in the various centres or chakras

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super-imposed upon the meru-daṇḍa, as the kuṇḍalinî passes through them in order to reach the highest point. Nâda, is vibration which in its highest and purest form becomes anâhata naḍa or unstruck sound.[27] Referring to the verses of the ginân quoted above, they speak of similar effects as experienced by a Yogî as he progresses upwards through his sâdhanâ. The verses above maintain that initially the practitioner hears the sound of a flute which is melodious. Then, in an unconstrained manner the sound becomes loud and intense. By and by the sound becomes subtle and it becomes less and less intense until it becomes what is known in the Haṭha Yoga as anâhata nâda.[28]

Together with nâda, which is regarded as an indicator of the level of progress achieved, there is yet another type of reaction secured during contemplation. During contemplation, in the Yoga terminology:

> one sees not with his eyes, as he does the objects of the world but various colors... Sometimes stars are seen glittering and lightning flashes in the sky. But these visions are maintained to be fleeting in their nature. At first these colors are seen in greatly agitated waves which project the unsteady condition of the mind; and as the practise intensifies, the mind becomes calm, and these color-waves become steady and motionless and appear as one deep ocean of light...[29]

The Brahm Prakâsh is not explicit about this type of reaction. It does point to the experience of a certain type of brightness. There is, however, a verse in a ginân from

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the corpus which says:

> In the triveṇî there is an eternal light,
> there sparkles the light;
> as if it rains pearls...[3]

This verse suggests that as a person progresses he feels as if there is light. The brightness initially appears as a pool of light which then seems to sparkle in front of the eyes. After the mind looses its waywardness and has become calm, the practitioner is said to have reached the highest state. Various experiences are manifested to him as he reaches the highest state. In the Yoga theory these experiences chiefly constitute anâhata nâda and a bright light appearing as one deep ocean of light. Similarly the Brahm Prakâsh says:

> Where the trumpet strikes anâhata nâda;
> where the sun rays radiate brightly...
> ...BP 75.

Reaching to the realm of akaśa, a practitioner is said to have succeeded in focussing both his breath and mind on the śabda itself. For a verse in the Brahm Prakâsh states:

> In an awful <anâhata> unconstrained manner,
> the sky thunders,
> the mind sits at the trio place <trikutî>.
> ...BP 69

It maintains that where the sky thunders in anâhata manner the mind sits calmly at the trikutî. The reference to trikutî, would in accordance with the Haṭha Yoga refer to the

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triveṇî or the confluence of iṅgalâ, piṅgalâ and the sukhmanâ. These nâḍîs, as shown above, are the three nâḍîs which meet in the nâbhi to finally meet at the highest point of the sukhmamâ. This point is the hole above the sahasrâra in the skull. It is also known as the gagana maṇḍala, referred to as the centre of creation. As the Brahm Prakâsh indicates:

> The creation is in the sukhmanâ ganga,
> where the surati śabda unite together...
>
> .BP 76.

Although the word surati occurs in numerous places in the ginâns, its meaning is not clear. A verse in a śloko attributed to Shams al-Dîn states:

> The True guru says,
> he whose heart is pierced by the arrow of love,
> how can he visualize anything else;
> his body roams the lower earth,
> and his surati goes up towards the sky...[31]

The meaning of surati is not clear even in the Haṭha Yoga manuals. C. Vaudeville, attempting to explain the various technical terms of the Haṭha Yoga theory, says that surati is perhaps a synonym for śruti or audition; since in Haṭha Yoga hearing of sound or nâda is a characteristic feature of a Yogî's practise. The meaning of surati would, therefore, come closer to śabda or nâda. The fact that surati-śabda Yoga is used in the Nâth-panthî writings would suggest such an equivalence to śabda-Yoga.[32]

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A somewhat clear explanation has been offered by S.A. Rizvi, who says "...the ancient name of the Nâth-panthî tradition was śabda-surati Yoga, and it is such a path in which the nada <sound> is a sâdhanâ."[33] This nada is heard in the viśûdhâ and âjñâ chakras. Hence the aim of a Yogî is to develop himself to hear the nâda, which as was maintained above, in its purest form becomes anâhata nâda. Anâhata nâda is heard in the highest state of a Yogî's progress. This state, it is maintained by the Nâth Yogîs, is pervaded by the 'Attributeless One'.[34] He further maintains, surati-śabda, infact, is that śabda which introduces consciousness in the practise of the śabda, so that both mind and breath are concentrated on the śabda alone, in order that the Yogî attain sahaja and thereby attain mokṣa. In a like manner, the Brahm Prakâsh says:

> When the surati-śabda overpowers <unmani> mind,
> then the fear of life and death vanishes...
>
> ...BP 88.

These verses suggest that where the surati and the śabda merge, i.e. when the mind and the breath are focussed absolutely on the śabda itself, the murîd has reached the highest state. To have reached this state is interpreted as having eliminated for himself the fear of life and death. The attainment of liberation from the bonds of life and death, in the Yoga terminology is equal to the attainment of sahaja.

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This state, however, according to the Brahm Prakâsh is pervaded by the śabda itself. Thus it states:

and I can talk of the world easily,
<but> the significance of that place cannot
be expressed...

Indivisible śabda cannot be impaired,
day and night remains in its pristine form...
...BP 77,78.

According to the Brahm Prakâsh, a murîd at the height of his spiritual progress attains the śabda itself. And attaining the śabda, he is said to have crossed the ocean of life, eliminated fear of life and death etc.

Hitherto, it has been seen that the mystical path or the inward journey elaborated in the Brahm Prakâsh is based on the Haṭha Yoga frame-work of the Tantric tradition. In accordance with the path underlined in the Brahm Prakâsh, a murîd on his inward journey conducted through the practise of the śabda passes through stages and states similar to those a Yogî would pass through in his sâdhanâ towards attaining sahaja. He initiates the path through the śabda practise, which in the Yoga theory is closely connected with breath control technique. This control, it is maintained, eventually results in the tuning of the mind and focussing breath absolutely on the śabda. Such a process results in a certain kind of ecstasy or religious experiences expressed in a like manner in both the Haṭha Yoga and the ginân Brahm

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Prakâsh. Experiencing the highest sort of ecstasy, a Yogî is said to attain sahaja.

However, the Brahm Prakâsh, referring to a path and results similar to a Yogî's sahaja, maintains that the highest state is pervaded by the śabda itself. The śabda, therefore, brings us to a reconsideration of what the śabda signifies. A murîd according to the Brahm Prakâsh initiates the path through śabda, progresses through śabda, and the experience culminates in a state pervaded by śabda itself.

As intimated earlier, the śabda which is given as a sumiran word is pîrshâh. The ginân maintains that as a murîd meditates on the given word, at the height of spiritual maturity he attains the Named, and that is mokşa for him. It remains to be seen at this point how the Brahm Prakâsh super-imposes a Shî'î form of Islam by pervading the sahaja state of the Yogîs with that of the śabda, i.e. the Named.

The Brahm Prakâsh establishes the identity of the Named by using the Dasa Avatâra theory of the Vaishṇavas. The ginân says that the Lord <saheb> whose Name is the object of quest has manifested himself for the sake of his creatures through several yugas. As seen above one of the major Hindu cosmological theories holds that the world is created in several yugas and kalpas.[38] There are four yugas. According to the Vaishṇava theory the Lord Vishṇu mainfests himself in

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ten incarnations during the four yugas. Conforming to this theory the Brahm Prakâsh says that in the Sat-yuga, the saheb manifested himself in four forms. Likewise in the Tretâ and the Dvâpara he manifested himself in three and two forms respectively.[36] In the present age known as Kali-yuga the Vaishṇavas are expecting the tenth Avatâra known as the 'Naklanki' to manifest himself.[37] The Brahm Prakâsh maintains that the tenth Avatâra has manifested himself into Islam, and he is none but the first Imâm of the Shî'ah.

> In the Kali-yuga he has taken the form of Naklanki...
> ...BP 137.

Corresponding to the idea of Naklanki who is the 'expected One', the Brahm Prakâsh says:

> When Imâm Mahdî extends his protection,
> twelve crores and innumerable souls
> will then attain liberation...
> ...BP 139.

According to the Shî'ah, as is well-known, the Mahdî is considered to be the expected Imâm, and when he manifests himself, he liberates the souls. The concept of Imâmah in Ismâ'îlism makes all the Imâms equal in essence. Hence the Mahdî is none but 'Alî the Imâm in essence.[38]

In the Brahm Prakâsh the śabda which is given as a sumiran word is pîrshâh. In Nizârî Ismâ'îlism the word refers to 'Alî the first Imâm of the Ismâ'îlîs. Since 'Alî is

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supposed to represent the instituion of Imâmah in essence, the word pîrshâh then refers to all the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî Imâms in general. Therefore, if the sumiran word is given as pîrshâh, and if the epithet of pîrshâh refers to 'Alî or the Imâms of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs ,then references to pîrshâh in the ginân must necessarily refer to a spiritual relation-ship between a murîd and the Imâm. Consequently, as a murîd meditates on the given word, which is the Name of the Lord, he, at the height of his spiritual maturity witnesses as the Brahm Prakâsh concludes:

> They will all witness the Omnipresence of 'Alî,
> whoever searches into the Brahm Gyân <divine light>...
> ...BP 146.

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Notes to Chapter III
Section <b>

[1]Ali Asani, "The Ismâ'îlî ginân, 15-16.

[2]A. Nânjî, The Nizârî, 121.

[3]Ali Asani, "The Ismâ'îlî ginân, 16.

[4]For the ginâns belonging to the first category see Note 2 in section <a> above.

To the second category belong: Satgur miliyâ mune âj ânand hû pami, <I have met the Satgur today>; Satgur bhetiya kem janiye, <How would you know when you have met the Lord>;

The third category of ginâns seem to appear predominantly in the corpus. They are: Hure piyasi âsh tori,< I am craving for thy vision>; darśan diyo mora nâth, dasi teri, <grant me thy vision, for I am a slave of thee>; Tum ku sadhare, <It has been a long time since you have parted from me>.

These are but a few examples of the various types of ginâns found in the mystical category. For translations of a few of the above-mentioned ginâns see, Gulam Ali Allana, Ginans.

[5]These two verses, I was informed, are still recited traditionally in the jamâ'ât khanâ of the Khôjâs, associated with the practise of bandagi <meditation>. The first verse quoted is found in the Shia Imami Ismailia Association for India, Pîr Sadardinna ginânno, Bombay 1971, 32. As for the other verse, we have been unable to locate it in the ginâns available to us.

[6]See our listings of the texts of the ginâns in the bibliography.

[7]A translation of the text of the Brahm Prakâsh has been offered in Chapter II above.

[8]G. Khakee, "The Dasa Avatara of the Satpanth Ismailis and the Imam Shahis of Indo-Pak," <Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1972>.

[9]Ibid., 110.

[10]Ibid. According to G. Khakee, the word pîrshâh has been replaced not too long ago by Ya 'Alî Ya Muhammad. However, the Imâm Shâhî branch still use the word pîrshâh. They even call the jâpa of pîrshâh, like the Tantrikas, as bîja mantra or magic seed. These Burhanpur Satpanthîs interpret bîja mantra as the dual mantra; the pîr represents

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the guru who is Imâm Shâh and shâh is used for the incarnation of 'Alî.

[11]W. Ivanow, Brief Survey, 57-58.

[12]Description of the various processes of the Hatha Yoga is limited to the more important details, sufficient to elucidate the mystical path outlined in the Brahm Prakâsh.

[13]Sayyid Imâm Shâh tatha bija Sayyidona ginânno, <Bombay: Ismailia Association for India, 1973>, 136.

[14]Ibid., 140.

[15]It is interesting to note that even the time period specified for meditation in the ginân is in accordance with the initial period of the Yogic practises.

[16]For a detailed explanation see section <a> above.

[17]R.D. Shariff, "Beliefs and Practices of the Ismâ'îlî Gnosis <Irfan>," Ilm, Vol.IV 2<Dec.,1978>, 4.

[18]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 120.

[19]Sayyid Imâm Shâh, 136.

[20]G.W. Briggs. Gorakhnâth, 307.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Sayyid Imâm Shâh, 123

[23]Jodh Singh, "Raj Yoga", in Guru Nanak and Indian Religious Thought, edited by Taran Singh, <Patalia: Punjabi University, 1970>, 21.

[24]B. Walker, Hindu World, Vol.II, 574-575.

[25]G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnâth, 321.

[26]see G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnâth, 341-47.

[27]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 129.

[28]B. Walker, Hindu World, Vol.II, 574-575.

[29]G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnâth, 342.

[29]Ibid., 342.

[30]Shia Imami Ismailia Association for India, Pîr Sadardinna ginânnô, Bombay, 1971, 28.

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[31]"Śloko Moto," in Pîr Shams na Grantho, published by Mukhî Lâljî Devrâj, n.d.

[32]C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 135.

[33]S.A. Rizvi, Alakhbânî, 126.

[34]Ibid., 127.

[35]For explanation of these terms see, John Dowson, A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History and Literature. 10th edition, <London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961>, 381-383.

[36]BP, 135-137.

[37] For details on the Dasa Avatâra theory into the ginâns see, G. Khakee, "The Dasa Avatâra.

[38]W. Ivanow, Brief Survey, 56-59.

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Concluding Remarks

We have examined the Brahm Prakâsh, one ginân from the religious corpus of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs, which forms only one aspect of the thought reflected in the ginâns. Nevertheless, the aspect we have dealt in this thesis is important since not only does the concept of sumiran appear predominantly in the entire corpus, but also since this concept constitutes a significant practise - bayt al-khyâl - within the present day Nizârî Ismâ'îlî religious system.

This study has led to revealing the incorporation of indigenous Indian religious thought into the Brahm Prakâsh. The striking feature which comes to the surface in the text is the similarity of Tantric terms to those used in the Brahm Prakâsh. The analysis above has revealed that the esoteric vocabulary which describes the mystical path - the various states and stages- in the Brahm Prakâsh appears to find its basis in the Haṭha Yoga of the Tantric school of thought. On its face the Brahm Prakâsh strongly projects a purely Hindu religious doctrine, which implies that the fundamental practise of bayt al-khyâl, within the religious system of the Indian Ismâ'îlîs seemingly finds its basis in a Hindu school of thought.

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However, before a conclusion can be reached there are a few observations which need to be considered. Firstly, we attempted to show that the Brahm Prakâsh super-imposes on the esoteric vocabulary of the Tantrikas a Shî'î form of Islam. The use of a specific aspect of the Haṭha Yoga of the Tantric tradition, namely, the technical vocabulary which illustrates the path for a Yogî, brings to light a fundamental difference between the ginân and the Tantric tradition. As maintained above, Tantrism spread and gained popularity in the medieval era through the Nath Yogîs who were basically Śaivites. Their form of Yoga focussed on the establishment of the union of Śiva, the Supreme God-head, with Śakti, the female energy of the Lord Śiva. A Nâth Yogî through his <u>sâdhanâ</u> aims at attaining the union of Śiva and Śakti within his own body, which is sahaja for him. A transcendent state which is equated with the attainment of bodily immortality.

On the other hand, it is important to note that, while the ginân, Brahm Prakâsh, reflects the use of Tantric jargon, it appears to do so by using a Vaishṇava sub-structure instead of the Śaivite base on which the Haṭha Yoga of the Nâth Yogîs is found. A murîd, it was shown, traversing the mystical path initiates the path through the practise of śabda, progresses through the śabda and the experience culminates in a state pervaded by the śabda itself. This śabda the ginân maintained is the name of the Lord. Thus, at the height of his spiritual maturity, by meditating on the

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name, a murîd attains the Named. We have seen above that the Brahm Prakâsh establishes the identity of the Named by utilizing the Dasa Avatâra theory of the Vaishṇavas. Lord Vishṇu, according to this theory incarnates himself in ten Avatâras. Of these, nine are believed to have been manifested in past yugas, and the Vaishṇavas are awaiting the manifestation of the tenth Avatâra known as Naklanki. The ginân maintains that this tenth Avatâra has already manifested himself and that he is none but ʿAlî, the first Imâm of the Ismâʿîlîs. Taking into consideration this significant difference between the ginân and the Tantric tradition, it appears that the Brahm Prakâsh restructures the Tantric element by super-imposing upon the Tantric frame-work a Shîʿî form of Islam.

Second, the Brahm Prakâsh is a ginân from the corpus, therefore it is essential to see it within the context of the ginâns generally. The Tantric technical vocabulary which is found to be the basis of the Brahm Prakâsh occurs prominently in the entire ginân corpus. Had the Brahm Prakâsh been the only text to use the Tantric vocabulary, it would have been easier to reach clear conclusions. But, because of the prominent appearance of these terms in the mystical category of ginâns, it seems that Tantrism, like the Dasa Avatâra theory in the ginâns, has played an important role in shaping the doctrines of the Nizârî Ismâʿîlîs in the Indian Sub-continent. This is evidenced from the ginâns found in the

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corpus. Tantric vocabulary is found in the ginâns beginning with compositions attributed to Shams al-Dîn, the alleged author of the ginân Brahm Prakâsh, until the use of Tantric vocabulary is found in the compositions attributed to the last of composers, Sayyidnâ Imâm Begum. After her death in early 1900's the composition process ceased and the ginân corpus was frozen.

An attempt to understand why Tantrism appears to have found expression in the ginâns calls for a consideration of the technical vocabulary itself. Since the underlying principle of the functioning of the kuṇḍalinî-śakti Yoga which is found to be similar in both the Haṭha Yoga and the ginâns, is expressed in a specific esoteric terminology. This peculiar esoteric vocabulary of the Tantric tradition is known as sandhabhaśa, explained as 'twilight language' or more appropriately as "a symbolic language used to signify something different than what is expressed by the words."[1] Various attempts have been made to interpret the key Tantric terms and concepts literally, but many uncertainties and discrepancies originate from the texts themselves which make it difficult to render an accurate version of any aspect of the Haṭha Yoga theory of the Tantric tradition.

To cite one common example, iḍâ, piṅgalâ and the sukhmanâ are the three principle nâḍis in the esoteric aspect of the human body in the Haṭha Yoga theory. These nâḍîs as we

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have seen above, are said to play an important role in the realization of the mystical experience within the human body. However, commentaries on the technical vocabulary of the Tantras offer several other interpretations of these nâḍîs. For instance in the Tantric system, man is conceived as a microcosm reflecting the greater cosmos. It is maintained by them that "whatever exists in the outer universe exists in us." These nâḍîs, therefore, assume a symbolic interpretation. The iḍâ is referred to as the Gangâ of the subtle body, the piṅgalâ as the Yamunâ and the sukhmanâ as the Saraswatî. Thus, according to them for example, if the Gangâ is within the body then clearly pilgrimages are unnecessary. From this follows that all forms of formal religious practises are useless. Since the Gangâ is within him, a man should develop himself to control these natural forces within him.[2] Yet, at another place, the term iḍâ has been interpreted as symbolizing the sun <surya> etc.[3]

In the Brahm Prakâsh these key terms are used in connection with their importance in the esoteric aspect of the body, in order to realize the mystical experience. It is difficult to know what other symbolic meaning these terms could have in the ginâns. But the cryptic nature of the Tantric language itself suggests why Tantrism appears to have found expression in the Ismâ'îlî ginâns to such a large extent. Chapter one above on the spread of the Nizârî da'wa into the Indian Sub-continent attempted to show how the da'wa

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sought to penetrate into Indian society. It was maintained that after the fall of Alamût, when the Nizârîs entered upon the Indian soil, the pîrs and the dâ'îs faced a critical problem. They had to present Islam in a manner which would be appealing to the society into which it sought to penetrate.[4] The attempts of the pîrs was to project Islam as a crowning phase of the whole development of Hinduism. Consequently, the efforts of the pîrs resulted in the critical integration of Hindu-Muslim thought which in turn led to a creation of a new literature called the ginâns. The ginâns as discussed above were basically geared to convey Ismâ'îlism to converts from Hinduism to Islam. Hence, one easily finds parallelism of thought reflected in the ginâns with those found in Bhakti and ṣûfî works of the Indian Sub-continent.[5]

Taking Tantrism into account, which is the basis of the thought reflected in the Brahm Prakâsh, there is evidence that Tantrism had been popularized by the Nath Yogîs in the Indian Sub-continent during the medieval era. Since it was during the medieval era that the Nizârî pîrs are alleged to have begun their da'wa activities, the popularity of the Nâth Yogîs and also their cryptic vocabulary perhaps, proved to be yet another tradition through which the pîrs and dâ'îs could convey Satpanth Ismâ'îlism.

Moreover, there are evidences that the society into

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which Nizârî Ismâ'îlism sought to penetrate was already under the influence of mystical trends. These mystics appear to have been largely under the influence of the Tantric tradition. References in the text of Brahm Prakâsh suggest that it is perhaps composed in line with the mystical trend of thought prevalent during the medieval era. Nearly one-third of the ginân focusses on showing the uselessness of various ascetic practises which are not centred on contemplation of the name of the Lord. Then it continues to mention several personalities who seem to have attained the mystical experience by following the mystical path elaborated in the Brahm Prakâsh. Personalities such as Kabîr, Guru Nânak, Nâmdev, Gorakhnâth, etc. are those whose works evidence Tantric influence in them.[6] Hence, if the pîrs attempted to penetrate such a society it was inevitable that they use the mode of expression which was popular.

Yet, another factor which perhaps indicates that Tantrism may not have been entirely an alien thought upon which the Nizârî pîrs super-imposed a Shî'î form of Islam. Reference of an earlier Ismâ'îlî work, Umm al-kitâb show a marked similarity of thought with the Tantric Yoga system.[7] Reference to a 'interior ascent of the spirit' similar to the Tantric Yoga system is alleged to have been advocated in the Umm al-kitâb.[8] Our study being limited in its scope to study the Brahm Prakâsh within the Indo-Muslim society has not extended to make a comparison of the thought reflected in the

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Umm al-kitâb and the ginâns. Yet at another level, it would be of interest to examine the nature of relation-ship between the thought forwarded in the Umm al-kitâb and the Haṭha Yoga of the Tantric tradition.

However, examining the ginân Brahm Prakâsh in the Indo-Muslim context, the use of the Tantric vocabulary and also the presence of these terms in the entire ginân corpus strongly indicate that the ginân finds its basis in a Hindu school of thought. The study further reveals that the Brahm Prakâsh restructures the Tantric element in its frame-work so as to make it an integral aspect of Ismâ'îlism. An aspect which is still reflected in a fundamental practise of the Indian Ismâ'îlîs, namely the bayt al-khyâl.

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Notes

[1] P.C. Bagchi, Studies in the Tantras, <Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1975>, 27-28.

[2]B. Walker, Hindu World, Vol.II, 68-69.

[3]P.C. Bagchi, Studies, 62-73.

[4]A, Nânjî, The Nizârî, 133.

[5]Ibid.,132

[6]see C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 86-119.

[7]Umm al-kitâb, the mother <or Archetype> of the Book is an ancient work dating probably Xth -XIth centuries A.D. It is alleged to be an Ismâ'îlî piece of work of the Central Asiatic origins. For details see, W. Ivanow, "Umm'l-kitâb," Der Islam, 1936<23>, 1-132.

[8]Pio Fillappani-Ronconi, "The Cosmology of Central Asiatic Ismâ'îlism," in Ismâ'îlî Contribution to Islamic Culture, edited by S.H. Nasr, <Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977>, 101-119.

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